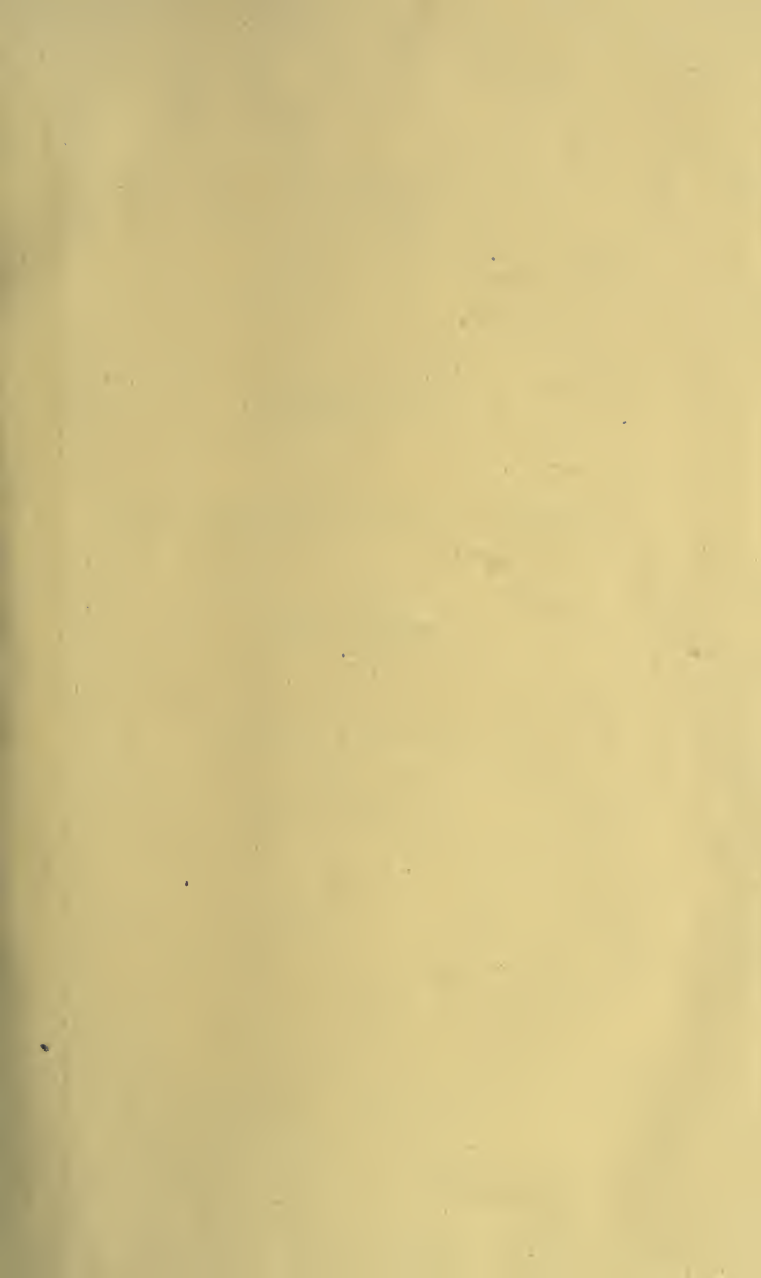






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NOVELS
OF
SIR EDWARD BULWER LYTTON

Library Edition

R O M A N C E S

VOL. III.

PRINTED BY WILLIAM BLACKWOOD AND SONS, EDINBURGH.

E U G E N E A R A M

A Tale

BY

SIR EDWARD BULWER LYTTON, BART.

[11.]

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"Our acts our angels are, or good or ill,
Our fatal Shadows that walk by us still.

. All things that are
Made for our general uses, are at war,—
Ev'n we among ourselves!"

JOHN FLETCHER, upon *An Honest Man's Fortune*.

EUGENE ARAM.



CHAPTER VI.

Aram alone among the Mountains.—His Soliloquy and Project.—
Scene between Himself and Madeline.

Luce non gratâ fruor;
Trepidante semper corde, non mortis metu
Sed*———".—SENeca; *Octavia*, Act I.

THE two men-servants of the house remained up the rest of the night: but it was not till the morning had advanced far beyond the usual time of rising in the fresh shades of Grassdale, that Madeline and Ellinor became visible; even Lester left his bed an hour later than his wont; and, knocking at Aram's door, found the student was already abroad, while it was evident that his bed had not been pressed during the whole of the night. Lester descended into the garden, and was

* I live a life of wretchedness; my heart perpetually trembling, not through fear of death, *but*——

there met by Peter Dealtry and a detachment of the band, who, as common-sense and Lester had predicted, were indeed, at a very early period of the watch, driven to their respective homes. They were now seriously concerned for their unmanliness, which they passed off as well as they could upon their conviction, "that nobody of Grassdale could ever really be robbed;" and promised, with sincere contrition, that they would be most excellent guards for the future. Peter was, in sooth, singularly chop-fallen, and could only defend himself by an incoherent mutter, from which the squire turned somewhat impatiently when he heard, louder than the rest, the words "seventy-seventh psalm, seventeenth verse—

"The clouds that were both thick and black
Did rain full plenteously."

Leaving the squire to the edification of the pious host, let us follow the steps of Aram, who at the early dawn had quitted his sleepless chamber, and, though the clouds at that time still poured down in a dull and heavy sleet, wandered away, whither he neither knew nor heeded. He was now hurrying, with unabated speed, though with no purposed bourne or object, over the chain of mountains that backed the green and lovely valleys among which his home was cast.

"Yes!" said he, at last halting abruptly, with a desperate resolution stamped on his countenance—"yes! I will so determine. If, after this interview, I feel that I cannot command and bind Houseman's perpetual secrecy, I will surrender Madeline at once. She has

loved me generously and trustingly. I will not link her life with one that may be called hence in any hour, and to so dread an account. Neither shall the grey hairs of Lester be brought, with the sorrow of my shame, to a dishonoured and untimely grave. And after the outrage of last night, the daring outrage, how can I calculate on the safety of a day? Though Houseman was not present, though I can scarce believe he *knew*, or at least abetted the attack, yet they were assuredly of his gang: had one been seized, the clue might have traced to his detection—were *he* detected, what should I have to dread? No, Madeline! no; not while this sword hangs over me will I subject *thee* to share the horror of my fate!”

This resolution, which was certainly generous, and yet no more than honest, Aram had no sooner arrived at, than he dismissed at once, by one of those efforts which powerful minds can command, all the weak and vacillating thoughts that might interfere with the sternness of his determination. He seemed to breathe more freely, and the haggard wanness of his brow relaxed at least from the workings that, but the moment before, distorted its wonted serenity with a maniac wildness.

He now pursued his desultory way with a calmer step.

“What a night!” said he, again breaking into the low murmur in which he was accustomed to hold commune with himself. “Had Houseman been one of the ruffians, a shot might have freed me, and with-

out a crime, for ever ; and, till the light flashed on their brows, I thought the smaller man bore his aspect. Ha ! out, tempting thought ! out on thee !” he cried aloud, and stamping with his foot ; then recalled by his own vehemence, he cast a jealous and hurried glance round him, though at that moment his step was on the very height of the mountains, where not even the solitary shepherd, save in search of some more daring straggler of the flock, ever brushed the dew from the cragged, yet fragrant soil. “ Yet,” he said, in a lower voice, and again sinking into the sombre depths of his reverie, “ it *is* a tempting, a wondrously tempting thought. And it struck athwart me like a flash of lightning when this hand was at his throat—a tighter strain, another moment, and Eugene Aram had not had an enemy, a witness against him left in the world. Ha ! are the dead no foes then ? are the dead no witnesses ?” Here he relapsed into utter silence, but his gestures continued wild, and his eyes wandered round with a bloodshot and unquiet glare. “ Enough,” at length he said calmly, and with the manner of one *who has rolled a stone from his heart* *—“ enough ! I will not so sully myself, unless all other hope of self-preservation be extinct. And why despond ? the plan I have thought of seems well laid, wise, consummate at all points. Let me consider—*forfeited the moment he re-enters England—not given till he has left it—paid periodically, and of such extent as to supply his wants, preserve him from crime, and forbid the pos-*

* Eastern saying.

sibility of extorting more : all this sounds well ; and if not feasible at last, why, farewell Madeline, and I myself leave this land for ever. Come what will to me—death in its vilest shape—let not the stroke fall on that breast. And if it be,” he continued, his face lighting up—“if it be, as it may yet, that I can chain this hell-hound, why, even then, the instant that Madeline is mine I will fly these scenes ; I will seek a yet obscurer and remoter corner of earth : I will choose another name.—Fool ! why did I not so before ? But matters it ? What is writ is writ. Who can struggle with the invisible and giant hand that launched the world itself into motion ; and at whose pre-decree we hold the dark boons of life and death ?”

It was not till evening that Aram, utterly worn out and exhausted, found himself in the neighbourhood of Lester’s house. The sun had only broken forth at its setting, and it now glittered, from its western pyre, over the dripping hedges, and spread a brief but magic glow along the rich landscape around ; the changing woods clad in the thousand dies of autumn ; the scattered and peaceful cottages, with their long wreaths of smoke curling upward, and the grey and venerable walls of the manor-house, with the church hard by, and the delicate spire, which, mixing itself with heaven, is at once the most touching and solemn emblem of the faith to which it is devoted. It was a Sabbath eve ; and from the spot on which Aram stood he might discern many a rustic train trooping

slowly up the green village lane towards the church ; and the deep bell which summoned to the last service of the day now swung its voice far over the sunlit and tranquil scene.

But it was not the setting sun, nor the autumnal landscape, nor the voice of the holy bell that now arrested the step of Aram. At a little distance before him, leaning over a gate, and seemingly waiting till the ceasing of the bell should announce the time to enter the sacred mansion, he beheld the figure of Madeline Lester. Her head, at the moment, was averted from him, as if she were looking after Ellinor and her uncle, who were in the churchyard among a little group of their homely neighbours ; and he was half in doubt whether to shun her presence, when she suddenly turned round, and, seeing him, uttered an exclamation of joy. It was now too late for avoidance ; and calling to his aid that mastery over his features which, in ordinary times, few more eminently possessed, he approached his beautiful mistress with a smile as serene, if not as glowing, as her own. But she had already opened the gate, and, bounding forward, met him half-way.

“ Ah, truant, truant,” said she ; “ the whole day absent, without inquiry or farewell ! After this, when shall I believe that thou really lovest me ? ”

“ But,” continued Madeline, gazing on his countenance, which bore witness, in its present languor, to the fierce emotions which had lately raged within—
“ but, heavens ! dearest, how pale you look ; you are

fatigued ; give me your hand, Eugene—it is parched and dry. Come into the house ;—you must need rest and refreshment.”

“ I am better here, my Madeline—the air and the sun revive me : let us rest by the stile yonder. But you were going to church, and the bell has ceased.”

“ I could attend, I fear, little to the prayers now,” said Madeline, “ unless you feel well enough, and will come to church with me.”

“ To church !” said Aram, with a half shudder. “ No ; my thoughts are in no mood for prayer.”

“ Then you shall give your thoughts to me, and I, in return, will pray for you before I rest.”

And so saying, Madeline, with her usual innocent frankness of manner, wound her arm in his, and they walked onward towards the stile Aram had pointed out. It was a little rustic stile, with chestnut-trees hanging over it on either side. It stands to this day, and I have pleased myself with finding Walter Lester's initials, and Madeline's also, with the date of the year, carved in half-worn letters on the wood, probably by the hand of the former.

They now rested at this spot. All around them was still and solitary ; the groups of peasants had entered the church, and nothing of life, save the cattle grazing in the distant fields, or the thrush starting from the wet bushes, was visible. The winds were lulled to rest, and, though somewhat of the chill of autumn floated on the air, it only bore a balm to the harassed brow and fevered veins of the

student ; and Madeline !—*she* felt nothing but his presence. It was exactly what we picture to ourselves of a Sabbath eve, unutterably serene and soft, and borrowing from the very melancholy of the declining year an impressive yet a mild solemnity.

There are seasons, often in the most dark or turbulent periods of our life, when (why, we know not) we are suddenly called from ourselves by the remembrances of early childhood : something touches the electric chain, and lo ! a host of shadowy and sweet recollections steal upon us. The wheel rests, the oar is suspended, we are snatched from the labour and travail of present life ; we are born again, and live anew. As the secret page in which the characters once written seem for ever effaced, but which, if breathed upon, gives them again into view ; so the memory can revive the images invisible for years : but while we gaze, the breath recedes from the surface, and all, one moment so vivid, with the next moment has become once more a blank !

“It is singular,” said Aram, “but often as I have paused at this spot, and gazed upon this landscape, a likeness to the scenes of my childish life, which it now seems to me to present, never occurred to me before. Yes, yonder, in that cottage, with the sycamores in front, and the orchard extending behind, till its boundary, as we now stand, seems lost among the woodland, I could fancy that I looked upon my father’s home. The clump of trees that lies yonder to the right could cheat me readily to the belief that I saw

the little grove in which, enamoured with the first passion of study, I was wont to pore over the thrice-read book through the long summer days ;—a boy—a thoughtful boy ; yet, oh, how happy ! What worlds appeared then to me to open in every page ! how exhaustless I thought the treasures and the hopes of life ! and beautiful on the mountain tops seemed to me the steps of knowledge ! I did not dream of all that the musing and lonely passion that I nursed was to entail upon me. There, in the clefts of the valley, on the ridges of the hill, or by the fragrant course of the stream, I began already to win its history from the herb or flower ; I saw nothing that I did not long to unravel its secrets ; all that the earth nourished ministered to one desire :—and what of low or sordid did there mingle with that desire ? The petty avarice, the mean ambition, the debasing love, even the heat, the anger, the fickleness, the caprice of other men, did they allure or bow down my nature from its steep and solitary eyrie ? I lived but to feed my mind ; wisdom was my thirst, my dream, my aliment, my sole fount and sustenance of life. And have I not sown the wind and reaped the whirlwind ? The glory of my youth is gone, my veins are chilled, my frame is bowed, my heart is gnawed with cares, my nerves are unstrung as a loosened bow ; and what, after all, is my gain ! Oh, God ! what is my gain ?”

“Eugene, dear, dear Eugene !” murmured Madeline, soothingly, and wrestling with her tears, “is not your gain great ? is it not triumph that you stand,

while yet young, almost alone in the world, for success in all that you have attempted?"

"And what," continued Aram, breaking in upon her—"what is this world which we ransack but a stupendous charnel-house? Everything that we deem most lovely, ask its origin?—Decay! When we rifle nature, and collect wisdom, are we not like the hags of old, culling simples from the rank grave, and extracting sorceries from the rotting bones of the dead? Everything around us is fathered by corruption, battered by corruption, and into corruption returns at last. Corruption is at once the womb and grave of Nature, and the very beauty on which we gaze—the cloud, and the tree, and the swarming waters—all are one vast panorama of death! But it did not always seem to me thus; and even now I speak with a heated pulse and a dizzy brain. Come, Madeline, let us change the theme."

And dismissing at once from his language, and perhaps, as he proceeded, also from his mind, all of its former gloom, except such as might shade, but not embitter, the natural tenderness of remembrance, Aram now related, with that vividness of diction, which, though we feel we can very inadequately convey its effect, characterised his conversation, and gave something of poetic interest to all he uttered, those reminiscences which belong to childhood, and which all of us take delight to hear from the lips of one we love.

It was while on this theme that the lights, which

the deepening twilight had now made necessary, became visible in the church, streaming afar through its large oriel window, and brightening the dark firs that overshadowed the graves around: and just at that moment the organ (a gift from a rich rector, and the boast of the neighbouring country) stole upon the silence with its swelling and solemn note. There was something in the strain of this sudden music that was so kindred with the holy repose of the scene—chimed so exactly to the chord now vibrating in Aram's mind, that it struck upon him at once with an irresistible power. He paused abruptly, "as if an angel spoke!" That sound, so peculiarly adapted to express sacred and unearthly emotion, none who have ever mourned or sinned can hear, at an unlooked-for moment, without a certain sentiment that either subdues, or elevates, or awes. But he—he was a boy once more!—he was again in the village church of his native place: his father, with his silver hair, stood again beside him; there was his mother, pointing to him the holy verse; there the half-arch, half-reverent face of his little sister (she died young!)—there the upward eye and hushed countenance of the preacher who had first raised his mind to knowledge, and supplied its food—all, all lived, moved, breathed again before him, all, as when he was young and guiltless, and at peace; hope and the future one word!

He bowed his head lower and lower; the hardness and hypocrisies of pride, the sense of danger and of horror that, in agitating, still supported the mind of

this resolute and scheming man, at once forsook him. Madeline felt his tears drop fast and burning on her hand, and the next moment, overcome by the relief it afforded to a heart preyed upon by fiery and dread secrets, which it could not reveal, and a frame exhausted by the long and extreme tension of all its powers, he laid his head upon that faithful bosom, and wept aloud.

CHAPTER VII.

Aram's Secret Expedition.—A Scene worthy the Actors.—Aram's address and powers of persuasion or hypocrisy.—Their Result.—A fearful Night.—Aram's solitary ride homeward.—Whom he meets by the way, and what he sees.

Macbeth. Now o'er the one half world
Nature seems dead.

Donaldbain. Our separated fortune;
Shall keep us both the safer.

Old Man. Hours dreadful, and things strange.—*Macbeth.*

“AND you must really go to ——, to pay your importunate creditor this very evening? Sunday is a bad day for such matters: but as you pay him by an order, it does not much signify; and I can well understand your impatience to feel relieved from the debt. But it is already late; and if it must be so, you had better start.”

“True,” said Aram, to the above remark of Lester's, as the two stood together without the door; “but do you feel quite secure and guarded against any renewed attack?”

“Why, unless they bring a regiment, yes! I have put a body of our patrol on a service where they can scarce be inefficient—viz. I have stationed them in the

house instead of without ; and I shall myself bear them company through the greater part of the night ; to-morrow I shall remove all that I possess of value to —— (the county town), including those unlucky guineas, which you will not ease me of.”

“The order you have kindly given me will amply satisfy my purpose,” answered Aram. “And so there has been no clue to these robberies discovered throughout the day?”

“None : to-morrow the magistrates are to meet at ——, and concert measures : it is absolutely impossible but that we should detect the villains in a few days—viz. if they remain in these parts. I hope to heaven you will not meet them this evening.”

“I shall go well armed,” answered Aram, “and the horse you lend me is fleet and strong. And now farewell for the present. I shall probably not return to Grassdale this night, or if I do, it will be at so late an hour, that I shall seek my own domicile without disturbing you.”

“No, no ; you had better remain in the town, and not return till morning,” said the squire. “And now let us come to the stables.”

To obviate all chance of suspicion as to the real place of his destination, Aram deliberately rode to the town he had mentioned as the one in which his pretended creditor expected him. He put up at an inn, walked forth as if to visit some one in the town, returned, remounted, and by a circuitous route came into the neighbourhood of the place in which he was to meet

Houseman ; then turning into a long and dense chain of wood, he fastened his horse to a tree, and looking to the priming of his pistols, which he carried under his riding-cloak, proceeded to the spot on foot.

The night was still, and not wholly dark ; for the clouds lay scattered though dense, and suffered many stars to gleam through the heavy air ; the moon herself was abroad, but on her decline, and looked forth with a wan and saddened aspect, as she travelled from cloud to cloud. It has been the necessary course of our narrative to portray Aram more often in his weaker moments than, to give an exact notion of his character, we could have altogether wished ; but whenever he stood in the actual presence of danger, his whole soul was in arms to cope with it worthily : courage, sagacity, even cunning, all awakened to the encounter ; and the mind which his life had so austereily cultivated repaid him in the urgent season with its acute address and unswerving hardihood. The Devil's Crag, as it was popularly called, was a spot consecrated by many a wild tradition, which would not, perhaps, be wholly out of character with the dark thread of this tale, did the rapidity of our narrative allow us to relate them.

The same stream which lent so soft an attraction to the valleys of Grassdale here assumed a different character ; broad, black, and rushing, it whirled along a course, overhung by shagged and abrupt banks. On the opposite side to that by which Aram now pursued his path, an almost perpendicular mountain was covered with gigantic pine and fir, that might have reminded a

German wanderer of the darkest recesses of the Hartz, and seemed, indeed, no unworthy haunt for the weird huntsman or the forest fiend. Over this wood the moon now shimmered with the pale and feeble light we have already described, and only threw into a more sombre shade the motionless and gloomy foliage. Of all the offspring of the forest, the fir bears, perhaps, the most saddening and desolate aspect. Its long branches, without absolute leaf or blossom; its dead, dark, eternal hue, which the winter seems to wither not, nor the spring to revive, have I know not what of a mystic and unnatural life. Around all woodland there is that *horror umbrarum*,* which becomes more solemn and awful amidst the silence and depth of night; but this is yet more especially the characteristic of that sullen evergreen. Perhaps, too, this effect is increased by the sterile and dreary soil on which, when in groves, it is generally found; and its very hardness, the very pertinacity with which it draws its strange unfluctuating life from the sternest wastes and most reluctant strata, enhance, unconsciously, the unwelcome effect it is calculated to create upon the mind. At this place, too, the waters that dashed beneath gave yet additional wildness to the rank verdure of the wood, and contributed, by their rushing darkness partially broken by the stars, and the hoarse roar of their chafed course, a yet more grim and savage sublimity to the scene.

Winding a narrow path (for the whole country was as familiar as a garden to his footstep) that led through

* Shadowy horror.

the tall, wet herbage, almost along the perilous brink of the stream, Aram was now aware, by the increased and deafening sound of the waters, that the appointed spot was nearly gained ; and presently the glimmering and imperfect light of the skies revealed the dim shape of a gigantic rock, that rose abruptly from the middle of the stream ; and which, rude, barren, vast, as it really was, seemed now, by the uncertainty of night, like some monstrous and deformed creature of the waters suddenly emerging from their vexed and dreary depths. This was the far-famed Crag, which had borrowed from tradition its evil and ominous name. And now, the stream, bending round with a broad and sudden swoop, showed at a little distance, ghostly and indistinct through the darkness, the mighty Waterfall, whose roar had been his guide. Only in one streak adown the giant cataract the stars were reflected ; and this long train of broken light glittered preternaturally forth through the rugged crags and sombre verdure that wrapped either side of the waterfall in utter and rayless gloom.

Nothing could exceed the forlorn and terrific grandeur of the spot ; the roar of the waters supplied to the ear what the night forbade to the eye. Incessant and eternal, they thundered down into the gulf ; and then shooting over that fearful basin, and forming another, but a mimic fall, dashed on till they were opposed by the sullen and abrupt crag below ; and besieging its base with a renewed roar, sent their foamy and angry spray half-way up the hoar ascent.

At this stern and dreary spot, well suited for such conferences as Aram and Houseman alone could hold, and which, whatever was the original secret that linked the two men thus strangely, seemed of necessity to partake of a desperate and lawless character, with danger for its main topic, and death itself for its colouring, Aram now paused, and with an eye accustomed to the darkness, looked around for his companion.

He did not wait long : from the profound shadow that girded the space immediately around the fall, Houseman emerged and joined the student. The stunning noise of the cataract in the place where they met, forbade any attempt to converse ; and they walked on by the course of the stream, to gain a spot less in reach of the deafening shout of the mountain giant as he rushed with his banded waters upon the valley like a foe.

It was noticeable that, as they proceeded, Aram walked on with an unsuspecting and careless demeanour ; but Houseman, pointing out the way with his hand, not leading it, kept a little behind Aram, and watched his motions with a vigilant and wary eye. The student, who had diverged from the path at Houseman's direction, now paused at a place where the matted bushes seemed to forbid any farther progress, and said, for the first time breaking the silence, " We cannot proceed ; shall this be the place of our conference ? "

" No," said Houseman, " we had better pierce the bushes. I know the way, but will not lead it."

" And wherefore ? "

"The mark of your gripe is still on my throat," replied Houseman, significantly: "you know as well as I that it is not always safe to have a friend lagging behind."

"Let us rest here, then," said Aram, calmly, the darkness veiling any alteration of his countenance which his comrade's suspicion might have created.

"Yet it were much better," said Houseman, doubtfully, "could we gain the cave below."

"The cave!" said Aram, starting, as if the word had a sound of fear.

"Ay, ay; but not St Robert's," said Houseman; and the grin of his teeth was visible through the dulness of the shade. "But come, give me your hand, and I will venture to conduct you through the thicket:—that is your left hand," observed Houseman, with a sharp and angry suspicion in his tone; "give me the right."

"As you will," said Aram, in a subdued, yet meaning voice, that seemed to come from his heart; and thrilled, for an instant, to the bones of him who heard it—"as you will, but for fourteen years I have not given this right hand, in pledge of fellowship, to living man; you alone deserve the courtesy—there!"

Houseman hesitated before he took the hand now extended to him.

"Pshaw!" said he, as if indignant at himself; "what scruples at a shadow! Come" [grasping the hand], "that's well—so, so; now we are in the thicket—tread firm—this way—hold," continued Houseman, under

his breath, as suspicion anew seemed to cross him—“hold! we can see each other’s face not even dimly now; but in this hand—*my* right is free—I have a knife that has done good service ere this; and if I do but suspect that you are about to play me false, I bury it in your heart. Do you heed me?”

“Fool!” said Aram, scornfully, “I should dread you dead yet more than living.”

Houseman made no answer, but continued to grope on through the path in the thicket, which he evidently knew well; though even in daylight, so thick were the trees, and so artfully had their boughs been left to cover the track, no path could have been discovered by one unacquainted with the clew.

They had now walked on for some minutes, and of late their steps had been threading a rugged and somewhat precipitous descent: all this while the pulse of the hand Houseman held beat with a steadfast and calm throb, as in the most quiet mood of learned meditation, although Aram could not but be conscious that a mere accident, a slip of the foot, an entanglement in the briers, might awaken the irritable fears of his ruffian comrade, and bring the knife to his breast. But this was not that form of death that could shake the nerves of Aram; nor, though arming his whole soul to ward off one danger, was he well sensible of another, that might have seemed equally near and probable, to a less collected and energetic nature. Houseman now halted, again put aside the boughs, proceeded a few steps, and by a certain dampness and oppression in the air, Aram

rightly conjectured himself in the cavern Houseman had spoken of.

“We are landed now,” said Houseman : “but wait, I will strike a light ; I do not love darkness, even with another sort of companion than the one I have now the honour to entertain !”

In a few moments a light was produced, and placed aloft on a crag in the cavern ; but the ray it gave was feeble and dull, and left all, beyond the immediate spot in which they stood, in a darkness little less Cimmerian than before.

“Fore Gad, it is cold,” said Houseman, shivering ; “but I have taken care, you see, to provide for a friend’s comfort.” So saying, he approached a bundle of dry sticks and leaves piled at one corner of the cave, applied the light to the fuel, and presently the fire rose crackling, breaking into a thousand sparks, and freeing itself gradually from the clouds of smoke in which it was enveloped. It now mounted into a ruddy and cheering flame, and the warm glow played picturesquely upon the grey sides of the cavern, which was of a rugged shape and small dimensions, and cast its reddening light over the forms of the two men.

Houseman stood close to the flame, spreading his hands over it, and a sort of grim complacency stealing along features singularly ill-favoured, and sinister in their expression, as he felt the animal luxury of the warmth.

Across his middle was a broad leathern belt, containing a brace of large horse-pistols, and the knife, or

rather dagger, with which he had menaced Aram—an instrument sharpened on both sides, and nearly a foot in length. Altogether, what with his muscular breadth of figure, his hard and rugged features, his weapons, and a certain reckless, bravo air which indescribably marked his attitude and bearing, it was not well possible to imagine a fitter habitant for that grim cave, or one from whom men of peace, like Eugene Aram, might have seemed to derive more reasonable cause of alarm.

The scholar stood at a little distance, waiting till his companion was entirely prepared for the conference, and his pale and lofty features, hushed in their usual deep, but at such a moment almost preternatural, repose. He stood leaning with folded arms against the rude wall; the light reflected upon his dark garments, with the graceful riding-cloak of the day half falling from his shoulder, and revealing also the pistols in his belt, and the sword which, though commonly worn at that time by all pretending to superiority above the lower and trading orders, Aram usually waived as a distinction, but now carried as a defence. And nothing could be more striking than the contrast between the ruffian form of his companion and the delicate and chiselled beauty of the student's features, with their air of mournful intelligence and serene command, and the slender though nervous symmetry of his frame.

“Houseman,” said Aram, now advancing, as his comrade turned his face from the flame towards him, “before we enter on the main subject of our proposed

commune, tell me, were you engaged in the attempt last night upon Lester's house ? ”

“By the fiend, no !” answered Houseman ; “nor did I learn it till this morning : it was unpremeditated till within a few hours of the time, by the two fools who alone planned it. The fact is, that I myself and a greater part of our little band were engaged some miles off, in the western part of the county. Two—our general spies—had been, of their own accord, into your neighbourhood, to reconnoitre. They marked Lester's house during the day, and gathered from unsuspected inquiry in the village—for they were dressed as mere country clowns—several particulars which induced them to think the house contained what might repay the trouble of breaking into it. And walking along the fields, they overheard the good master of the house tell one of his neighbours of a large sum at home ; nay, even describe the place where it was kept : that determined them ;—they feared that the sum might be removed the next day ; they had noted the house sufficiently to profit by the description given : they determined, then, of themselves, for it was too late to reckon on our assistance, to break into the room in which the money was kept—though from the aroused vigilance of the frightened hamlet and the force within the house, they resolved to attempt no further booty. They reckoned on the violence of the storm, and the darkness of the night, to prevent their being heard or seen : they were mistaken—the house was alarmed, they were no sooner in the luckless room, than——”

“Well, I know the rest. Was the one wounded dangerously hurt?”

“Oh, he will recover—he will recover; our men are no chickens. But I own I thought it natural that you might suspect me of sharing in the attack; and though, as I have said before, I do not love you, I have no wish to embroil matters so far as an outrage on the house of your father-in-law might be reasonably expected to do;—at all events, while the gate to an amicable compromise between us is still open.”

“I am satisfied on this head,” said Aram, “and I can now treat with you in a spirit of less distrustful precaution than before. I tell you, Houseman, that the terms are no longer at your control; you must leave this part of the country, and that forthwith, or you inevitably perish. The whole population is alarmed, and the most vigilant of the London police have been already sent for. Life is sweet to you as to us all, and I cannot imagine you so mad as to incur, not the risk, but the certainty of losing it. You can no longer, therefore, hold the threat of your presence over my head. Besides, were you able to do so, I at least have the power, which you seem to have forgotten, of freeing myself from it. Am I chained to yonder valleys? Have I not the facility of quitting them at any moment I will? of seeking a hiding-place which might baffle, not only your vigilance, to discover me, but that of the law? True, my approaching marriage puts some clog upon my wing; but you know that I, of all men, am not likely to be the slave of passion.

And what ties are strong enough to arrest the steps of him who flies from a fearful death? Am I using sophistry here, Houseman? Have I not reason on my side?"

"What you say is true enough," said Houseman, reluctantly; "I do not gainsay it. But I know you have not sought me, in this spot, and at this hour, for the purpose of denying my claims: the desire of compromise alone can have brought you hither."

"You speak well," said Aram, preserving the admirable coolness of his manner; and continuing the deep and sagacious hypocrisy by which he sought to baffle the dogged covetousness and keen sense of interest with which he had to contend. "It is not easy for either of us to deceive the other. We are men, whose perception a life of danger has sharpened upon all points; I speak to you frankly, for disguise is unavailing. Though I can fly from your reach—though I can desert my present home and my intended bride—I would fain think I have free and secure choice to preserve that exact path and scene of life which I have chalked out for myself: I would fain be rid of all apprehension from you. There are two ways only by which this security can be won: the first is through your death;—nay, start not, nor put your hand on your pistol; you have not now cause to fear me. Had I chosen that method of escape, I could have effected it long since: when months ago you slept under my roof,—ay, *slept*,—what should have hindered me from stabbing you during the slumber? Two nights since,

when my blood was up, and the fury upon me,—what should have prevented me tightening the grasp that you so resent, and laying you breathless at my feet? Nay, now, though you keep your eye fixed upon my motions, and your hand upon your weapon, you would be no match for a desperate and resolved man, who might as well perish in conflict with you as by the protracted accomplishment of your threats. Your ball *might* fail (even now I see your hand trembles)—mine, *if* I so will it, is certain death. No, Houseman, it would be as vain for your eye to scan the dark pool into whose breast yon cataract casts its waters, as for your intellect to pierce the depths of my mind and motives. Your murder, though in self-defence, would lay a weight upon my soul which would sink it for ever: I should see, in your death, new chances of detection spread themselves before me: the terrors of the dead are not to be bought or awed into silence; I should pass from one peril into another; and the law's dread vengeance might fall upon me, through the last peril, even yet more surely than through the first. Be composed, then, on this point! From my hand, unless you urge it madly upon yourself, you are wholly safe. Let us turn to my second method of attaining security. It lies, not in your momentary cessation from persecutions; not in your absence from this spot alone; you must quit the country—you must never return to it—your home must be cast, and your very grave dug, in a foreign soil. Are you prepared for this? If not, I can say no more; and I again cast myself passive into the arms of fate.”

“ You ask,” said Houseman, whose fears were allayed by Aram’s address, though at the same time his dissolute and desperate nature was subdued and tamed in spite of himself by the very composure of the loftier mind with which it was brought in contact ;—“ you ask,” said he, “ no trifling favour of a man—to desert his country for ever ; but I am no dreamer, that I should love one spot better than another. I might, perhaps, prefer a foreign clime, as the safer and the freer from old recollections, if I could live in it as a man who loves the relish of life should do. Show me the advantages I am to gain by exile, and farewell to the pale cliffs of England for ever !”

“ Your demand is just,” answered Aram. “ Listen, then. I am willing to coin all my poor wealth, save alone the barest pittance wherewith to sustain life ; nay, more, I am prepared also to melt down the whole of my possible expectations from others, into the form of an annuity to yourself. But mark, it will be taken out of my hands, so that you can have no power over me to alter the conditions with which it will be saddled. It will be so vested that it shall commence the moment you touch a foreign clime, and wholly and for ever cease the moment you set foot on any part of English ground ; or, mark also, at the moment of my death. I shall then know that no further hope from me can induce you to risk this income ; for, as I shall have spent my all in attaining it, you cannot even meditate the design of extorting more. I shall know that you will not menace my life ; for my death would be the de-

struction of your fortunes. We shall live thus separate and secure from each other ; you will have only cause to hope for my safety, and I shall have no reason to shudder at your pursuits. It is true, that one source of fear might exist for me still—namely, that in dying you should enjoy the fruitless vengeance of criminating me. But this chance I must patiently endure ; you, if older, are more robust and hardy than myself—your life will probably be longer than mine ; and, even were it otherwise, why should we destroy one another ? I will solemnly swear to respect your secret at my death-bed ; why not on your part, I say not swear, but resolve, to respect mine ? We cannot love one another, but why hate with a gratuitous and demon vengeance ? No, Houseman, however circumstances may have darkened or steeled your heart, it is touched with humanity yet ; you will owe to me the bread of a secure and easy existence—you will feel that I have stripped myself, even to penury, to purchase the comforts I cheerfully resign to you—you will remember that, instead of the sacrifices enjoined by this alternative, I might have sought only to counteract your threats by attempting a life that you strove to make a snare and torture to my own. You will remember this ; and you will not grudge me the austere and gloomy solitude in which I seek to forget, or the one solace with which I, perhaps vainly, endeavour to cheer my passage to a quiet grave. No, Houseman, no ; dislike, hate, menace me as you will, I still feel I shall have no cause to dread the mere wantonness of your revenge.”

These words, aided by a tone of voice and an expression of countenance that gave them perhaps their chief effect, took even the hardened nature of Houseman by surprise ; he was affected by an emotion which he could not have believed it possible the man who till then had galled him by the humbling sense of inferiority could have created. He extended his hand to Aram.

“By ——,” he exclaimed, with an oath which we spare the reader, “you are right ! you have made me as helpless in your hands as an infant. I accept your offer—if I were to refuse it, I should be driven to the same courses I now pursue. But look you, I know not what may be the amount of the annuity you can raise. I shall not, however, require more than will satisfy my wants ; which, if not so scanty as your own, are not at least very extravagant or very refined. As for the rest, if there be any surplus, in God’s name keep it for yourself, and rest assured that, so far as I am concerned, you shall be molested no more.”

“No, Houseman,” said Aram, with a half smile, “you shall have all I first mentioned ; that is, all beyond what nature craves, honourably and fully. Man’s best resolutions are weak : if you knew I possessed aught to spare, a fancied want, a momentary extravagance, might tempt you to demand it. Let us put ourselves beyond the possible reach of temptation. But do not flatter yourself by the hope that the income will be magnificent. My own annuity is but trifling, and the half of the dowry I expect from my future father-in-

law is all that I can at present obtain. The whole of that dowry is insignificant as a sum. But if this does not suffice for you, I must beg or borrow elsewhere."

"This, after all, is a pleasanter way of settling business," said Houseman, "than by threats and anger. And now I will tell you exactly the sum on which, if I could receive it yearly, I could live without looking beyond the pale of the law for more—on which I could cheerfully renounce England, and commence 'the honest man.' But then, hark you, I must have half settled on my little daughter."

"What! have you a child?" said Aram, eagerly, and well pleased to find an additional security for his own safety.

"Ay, a little girl—my only one—in her eighth year. She lives with her grandmother, for she is motherless; and that girl must not be left quite destitute should I be summoned hence before my time. Some twelve years hence—as poor Jane promises to be pretty—she may be married off my hands; but her childhood must not be exposed to the chances of beggary or shame."

"Doubtless not, doubtless not. Who shall say now that we ever outlive feeling?" said Aram. "Half the annuity shall be settled upon her, should she survive you; but on the same condition, ceasing when I die, or the instant of your return to England. And now, name the sum that you deem sufficing."

"Why," said Houseman, counting on his fingers, and muttering, "twenty—fifty—wine and the creature

cheap abroad—humph ! a hundred for living, and half as much for pleasure. Come, Aram, one hundred and fifty guineas per annum, English money, will do for a foreign life—you see I am easily satisfied.”

“Be it so,” said Aram ; “I will engage, by one means or another, to obtain what you ask. For this purpose I shall set out for London to-morrow ; I will not lose a moment in seeing the necessary settlement made as we have specified. But meanwhile you must engage to leave this neighbourhood, and, if possible, cause your comrades to do the same ; although you will not hesitate, for the sake of your own safety, immediately to separate from them.”

“Now that we are on good terms,” replied Houseman, “I will not scruple to oblige you in these particulars. My comrades *intend* to quit the country before to-morrow ; nay, half are already gone : by daybreak I myself will be some miles hence, and separated from each of them. Let us meet in London after the business is completed, and there conclude our last interview on earth.”

“What will be your address ?”

“In Lambeth there is a narrow alley that leads to the water-side, called Peveril Lane. The last house to the right, towards the river, is my usual lodging—a safe resting-place at all times, and for all men.”

“There and then will I seek you. And now, Houseman, fare you well ! As you remember your word to me, may life flow smooth for your child.”

“Eugene Aram,” said Houseman, “there is about

you something against which the fiercer devil within me would rise in vain. I have read that the tiger can be awed by the human eye, and you compel me into submission by a spell equally unaccountable. You are a singular man, and it seems to me a riddle how we could ever have been thus connected; or how—but we will not rip up the past, it is an ugly sight, and the fire is just out. Those stories do not do for the dark. But to return;—were it only for the sake of my child, you might depend upon me now; better, too, an arrangement of this sort, than if I had a larger sum in hand, which I might be tempted to fling away, and, in looking for more, run my neck into a halter, and leave poor Jane upon charity. But come, it is almost dark again, and no doubt you wish to be stirring: stay, I will lead you back, and put you on the right track, lest you stumble on my friends.”

“Is this cavern one of their haunts?” said Aram.

“Sometimes; but they sleep the other side of the Devil’s Crag to-night. Nothing like a change of quarters for longevity—eh?”

“And they easily spare you?”

“Yes, if it be only on rare occasions, and on the plea of *family* business. Now then, your hand as before. ’Sdeath! how it rains!—lightning too!—I could look with less fear on a naked sword than those red, forked, blinding flashes.—Hark! thunder!”

The night had now, indeed, suddenly changed its aspect; the rain descended in torrents, even more impetuously than on the former night, while the

thunder burst over their very heads, as they wound upward through the brake. With every instant the lightning, darting through the riven chasm of the blackness that seemed suspended as in a solid substance above, brightened the whole heaven into one livid and terrific flame, and showed to the two men the faces of each other, rendered deathlike and ghastly by the glare. Houseman was evidently affected by the fear that sometimes seizes even the sturdiest criminals when exposed to those more fearful phenomena of the heavens, which seem to humble into nothing the power and the wrath of man. His teeth chattered, and he muttered broken words about the peril of wandering near trees when the lightning was of that forked character, quickening his pace at every sentence, and sometimes interrupting himself with an ejaculation, half oath, half prayer, or a congratulation that the rain at least diminished the danger. They soon cleared the thicket, and a few minutes brought them once more to the banks of the stream and the increased roar of the cataract. No earthly scene, perhaps, could surpass the appalling sublimity of that which they beheld;—every instant the lightning, which became more and more frequent, converting the black waters into billows of living fire, or wreathing itself in lurid spires around the huge crag that now rose in sight; and again, as the thunder rolled onward, darting its vain fury upon the rushing cataract and the tortured breast of the gulf that raved below. And the sounds that filled the air were even

more fraught with terror and menace than the scene ; —the waving, the groans, the crash of the pines on the hill, the impetuous force of the rain upon the whirling river, and the everlasting roar of the cataract, answered anon by the yet more awful voice that burst above it from the clouds.

They halted while yet sufficiently distant from the cataract to be heard by each other. “My path,” said Aram, as the lightning now paused upon the scene, and seemed literally to wrap in a lurid shroud the dark figure of the student, as he stood, with his hand calmly raised, and his cheek pale, but dauntless and composed—“my path now lies yonder : in a week we shall meet again.”

“By the fiend,” said Houseman, shuddering, “I would not, for a full hundred, ride alone through the moor you will pass ! There stands a gibbet by the road, on which a parricide was hanged in chains. Pray Heaven this night be no omen of the success of our present compact !”

“A steady heart, Houseman,” answered Aram, striking into the separate path, “is its own omen.”

The student soon gained the spot in which he had left his horse ; the animal had not attempted to break the bridle, but stood trembling from limb to limb, and testified by a quick short neigh the satisfaction with which it hailed the approach of its master, and found itself no longer alone.

Aram remounted, and hastened once more into the main road. He scarcely felt the rain, though the fierce wind drove it right against his path ; he scarcely

marked the lightning, though at times it seemed to dart its arrows on his very form: his heart was absorbed in the success of his schemes.

“Let the storm without howl on,” thought he, “that within hath a respite at last. Amidst the winds and rains I can breathe more freely than I have done on the smoothest summer day. By the charm of a deeper mind and a subtler tongue I have conquered this desperate foe; I have silenced this inveterate spy; and, Heaven be praised, he too has human ties, and by those ties I hold him! Now, then, I hasten to London—I arrange this annuity—see that the law tightens every cord of the compact: and when all is done, and this dangerous man fairly departed on his exile, I return to Madeline, and devote to her a life no longer the vassal of accident and the hour. But I have been taught caution. Secure as my own prudence may have made me from further apprehension of Houseman, I will yet place myself *wholly* beyond his power: I will still consummate my former purpose, adopt a new name, and seek a new retreat: Madeline may not know the real cause; but this brain is not barren of excuse. Ah!” as, drawing his cloak closer round him, he felt the purse hid within his breast which contained the order he had obtained from Lester—“ah! this will now add its quota to purchase, not a momentary relief, but the stipend of perpetual silence. I have passed through the ordeal easier than I had hoped for. Had the devil at his heart been more difficult to lay, so necessary is his absence that I must have purchased it at any cost.

Courage, Eugene Aram! thy mind, for which thou hast lived, and for which thou hast hazarded thy soul—if soul and mind be distinct from each other—thy mind can support thee yet through every peril: not till thou art stricken into idiocy shalt thou behold thyself defenceless. How cheerfully,” muttered he, after a momentary pause—“how cheerfully, for safety, and to breathe with a quiet heart the air of Madeline’s presence, shall I rid myself of all save enough to defy want! And want can never *now* come to me, as of old. He who knows the sources of every science from which wealth is wrought, holds even wealth at his will.”

Breaking at every interval into these soliloquies, Aram continued to breast the storm until he had won half his journey, and had come upon a long and bleak moor, which was the entrance to that beautiful line of country in which the valleys around Grassdale are embosomed: faster and faster came the rain; and though the thunder-clouds were now behind, they yet followed loweringly, in their black array, the path of the lonely horseman.

But now he heard the sound of hoofs making towards him; he drew his horse on one side of the road, and at that instant, a broad flash of lightning illumining the space around, he beheld four horsemen speeding along at a rapid gallop; they were armed, and conversing loudly—their oaths were heard jarringly and distinctly amidst all the more solemn and terrific sounds of the night. They came on, sweeping by the student,

whose hand was on his pistol, for he recognised in one of the riders the man who had escaped unwounded from Lester's house. He and his comrades were evidently, then, Houseman's desperate associates; and they, too, though they were borne too rapidly by Aram to be able to rein in their horses on the spot, had seen the solitary traveller, and already wheeled round, and called upon him to halt!

The lightning was again gone, and the darkness snatched the robbers and their intended victim from the sight of each other. But Aram had not lost a moment; fast fled his horse across the moor, and when, with the next flash, he looked back, he saw the ruffians, unwilling even for booty to encounter the horrors of the night, had followed him but a few paces, and again turned round; still he dashed on, and had now nearly passed the moor; the thunder rolled fainter and fainter from behind, and the lightning only broke forth at prolonged intervals, when suddenly, after a pause of unusual duration, it brought the whole scene into a light, if less intolerable, even more livid than before. The horse, that had hitherto sped on without start or stumble, now recoiled in abrupt affright; and the horseman, looking up at the cause, beheld the gibbet, of which Houseman had spoken, immediately fronting his path, with its ghastly tenant waving to and fro, as the winds rattled through the parched and arid bones; and the inexpressible grin of the skull fixed, as in mockery, upon his countenance.

BOOK IV.

CHAPTER I.

In which we return to Walter.—His Debt of Gratitude to Mr Pertinax Fillgrave.—The Corporal's Advice, and the Corporal's Victory.

Let a physician be ever so excellent, there will be those that censure him.

Gil Blas.

WE left Walter in a situation of that critical nature that it would be inhuman to delay our return to him any longer. The blow by which he had been felled stunned him for an instant; but his frame was of no common strength and hardihood, and the imminent peril in which he was placed served to recall him from the momentary insensibility. On recovering himself he felt that the ruffians were dragging him towards the hedge, and the thought flashed upon him that their object was murder. Nerved by this idea, he collected his strength, and suddenly wresting himself from the grasp of one of the ruffians, who had seized him by the collar, he had already gained his

knee, and now his feet, when a second blow once more deprived him of sense.

When a dim and struggling consciousness recurred to him, he found that the villains had dragged him to the opposite side of the hedge, and were deliberately robbing him. He was on the point of renewing a useless and dangerous struggle, when one of the ruffians said—

“I think he stirs; I had better draw my knife across his throat.”

“Pooh, no!” replied another voice; “never kill if it can be helped: trust me, ’tis an ugly thing to think of afterwards. Besides, what use is it? A robbery in these parts is done and forgotten; but a murder rouses the whole country.”

“Damnation, man! why, the deed’s done already: he’s as dead as a door-nail.”

“Dead!” said the other, in a startled voice. “No, no!” and, leaning down, the ruffian placed his hand on Walter’s heart. The unfortunate traveller felt his flesh creep as the hand touched him, but prudently abstained from motion or exclamation. He thought, however, as with dizzy and half-shut eyes he caught the shadowy and dusk outline of the face that bent over him, so closely that he felt the breath of its lips, that it was a face he had seen before; and as the man now rose, and the wan light of the skies gave a somewhat clearer view of his features, the supposition was heightened, though not absolutely confirmed. But Walter had no farther power to observe his plunder-

ers ; again his brain reeled ; the dark trees, the grim shadows of human forms, swam before his glazing eye ; and he sunk once more into a profound insensibility.

· Meanwhile the doughty corporal had, at the first sight of his master's fall, halted abruptly at the spot to which his steed had carried him ; and coming rapidly to the conclusion that three men were best encountered at a distance, he fired his two pistols, and without staying to see if they took effect, which, indeed, they did not, galloped down the precipitous hill with as much despatch as if it had been the last stage to "Lunnun."

"My poor young master !" muttered he. "But if the worst comes to the worst, the chief part of the money's in the saddle-bags any how ; and so, messieurs thieves, you're bit—baugh !"

The corporal was not long in reaching the town and alarming the loungers at the inn-door. A *posse comitatus* was soon formed ; and, armed as if they were to have encountered all the robbers between Hounslow and the Apennine, a band of heroes, with the corporal, who had first deliberately reloaded his pistols, at their head, set off to succour "the poor gentleman *what* was already murdered."

They had not got far before they found Walter's horse, which had luckily broke from the robbers, and was now quietly regaling himself on a patch of grass by the road-side. "*He* can get *his* supper, the beast !" grunted the corporal, thinking of his own ; and bade

one of the party try to catch the animal, which, however, would have declined all such proffers, had not a long neigh of recognition from the Roman nose of the corporal's steed, striking familiarly on the straggler's ear, called it forthwith to the corporal's side; and (while the two chargers exchanged greeting) the corporal seized its rein.

When they came to the spot from which the robbers had made their sally, all was still and tranquil; no Walter was to be seen. The corporal cautiously dismounted, and searched about with as much minuteness as if he were looking for a pin; but the host of the inn at which the travellers had dined the day before, stumbled at once on the right track. Gouts of blood on the white chalky soil directed him to the hedge, and, creeping through a small and recent gap, he discovered the yet breathing body of the young traveller.

Walter was now conducted with much care to the inn; a surgeon was already in attendance; for having heard that a gentleman had been murdered without his knowledge, Mr Pertinax Fillgrave had rushed from his house, and placed himself on the road, that the poor creature might not, at least, be buried without his assistance. So eager was he to begin, that he scarce suffered the unfortunate Walter to be taken within, before he whipped out his instruments, and set to work with the smack of an *amateur*.

Although the surgeon declared his patient to be in the greatest possible danger, the sagacious corporal,

who thought himself more privileged to know about wounds than any man of peace, by profession, however destructive by practice, could possibly be, had himself examined those his master had received, before he went down to taste his long-delayed supper; and he now confidently assured the landlord, and the rest of the good company in the kitchen, that the blows on the head had been mere flea-bites, and that his master would be as well as ever in a week at the farthest.

And, indeed, when Walter the very next morning awoke from the stupor, rather than sleep, he had undergone, he felt himself surprisingly better than the surgeon, producing his probe, hastened to assure him he possibly *could* be.

By the help of Mr Pertinax Fillgrave, Walter was detained several days in the town; nor is it wholly improbable, but that for the dexterity of the corporal, he might be in the town to this day; not, indeed, in the comfortable shelter of the old-fashioned inn, but in the colder quarters of a certain green spot, in which, despite of its rural attractions, few persons are willing to fix a permanent habitation.

Luckily, however, one evening, the corporal, who had been, to say truth, very regular in his attendance on his master—for, bating the selfishness consequent, perhaps, on his knowledge of the world, Jacob Bunting was a good-natured man on the whole, and liked his master as well as he did anything, always excepting Jacobina and board-wages—one evening, we say, the corporal, coming into Walter's apartment, found him

sitting up in his bed, with a very melancholy and dejected expression of countenance.

“And well, sir, what does the doctor say?” asked the corporal, drawing aside the curtains.

“Ah! Bunting, I fancy it’s all over with me!”

“The Lord forbid, sir! You’re a-jesting, surely?”

“Jesting! my good fellow: ah! just get me that phial.”

“The filthy stuff!” said the corporal, with a wry face. “Well, sir, if I had the dressing of you—been half-way to Yorkshire by this. Man’s a worm; and when a doctor gets un on his hook, he is sure to angle for the devil with the bait—augh!”

“What! you really think that d—d fellow, Fillgrave, is keeping me on in this way?”

“Is he a fool, to give up three phials a-day, 4s. 6d. item, ditto, ditto?” cried the corporal, as if astonished at the question. “But don’t you feel yourself getting a deal better every day? Don’t you feel all this ere stuff revive you?”

“No, indeed, I was amazingly better the first day than I am now; I make progress from worse to worse. Ah! Bunting, if Peter Dealtry were here, he might help me to an appropriate epitaph: as it is, I suppose I shall be very simply labelled. Fillgrave will do the whole business, and put it down in his bill—item, nine draughts; item, one epitaph.”

“Lord-a-mercy, your honour!” said the corporal, drawing out a little red-spotted pocket-handkerchief; “how can—jest so?—it’s quite moving.”

"I wish *we* were moving!" sighed the patient.

"And so we might be," cried the corporal; "so we might, if you'd pluck up a bit. Just let me look at your honour's head; I knows what a confusion is better nor any of 'em."

The corporal having obtained permission, now removed the bandages wherewith the doctor had bound his intended sacrifice to Pluto, and after peering into the wounds for about a minute, he thrust out his under lip, with a contemptuous,—

"Pshaugh! augh! And how long," said he, "does Master Fillgrave say you be to be under his hands— augh!"

"He gives me hopes that I may be taken out an airing very gently (yes, hearses always go very gently!) in about three weeks!"

The corporal started, and broke into a long whistle. He then grinned from ear to ear, snapped his fingers, and said, "Man of the world, sir—man of the world every inch of him!"

"He seems resolved that I shall be a man of another world," said Walter.

"Tell ye what, sir—take my advice—your honour knows I be no fool—throw off them ere wrappers; let me put on a scrap of plaster—pitch phials to devil—order out horses to-morrow, and when you've been in the air half an hour, won't know yourself again!"

"Bunting! the horses out to-morrow?—Faith, I don't think I could walk across the room."

"Just try, your honour."

“Ah! I’m very weak, very weak—my dressing-gown and slippers—your arm, Bunting—well, upon my honour, I walk very stoutly, eh! I should not have thought this! Leave go: why, I really get on without your assistance!”

“Walk as well as ever you did.”

“Now I’m out of bed, I don’t think I shall go back again to it.”

“Would not, if I was your honour.”

“And after so much exercise, I really fancy I’ve a sort of an appetite.”

“Like a beefsteak?”

“Nothing better.”

“Pint of wine?”

“Why, that would be too much—eh?”

“Not it.”

“Go, then, my good Bunting: go, and make haste—stop, I say, that d—d fellow——”

“Good sign to swear,” interrupted the corporal; “swore twice within last five minutes—famous symptom!”

“Do you choose to hear me? That d—d fellow, Fillgrave, is coming back in an hour to bleed me: do you mount guard—refuse to let him in—pay him his bill—you have the money. And harkye, don’t be rude to the rascal.”

“Rude, your honour! not I—been in the Forty-second—knows discipline—only rude to the privates!”

The corporal having seen his master conduct himself respectably toward the viands with which he supplied

him—having set his room to rights, brought him the candles, borrowed him a book, and left him, for the present, in extremely good spirits, and prepared for the flight of the morrow—the corporal, I say, now lighting his pipe, stationed himself at the door of the inn, and waited for Mr Pertinax Fillgrave. Presently the doctor, who was a little thin man, came bustling across the street, and was about, with a familiar “Good evening,” to pass by the corporal, when that worthy, dropping his pipe, said respectfully, “Beg pardon, sir—want to speak to you—a little favour. Will your honour walk into the back-parlour?”

“Oh! another patient,” thought the doctor; “these soldiers are careless fellows—often get into scrapes. Yes, friend, I’m at your service.”

The corporal showed the man of phials into the back-parlour, and, hemming thrice, looked sheepish, as if in doubt how to begin. It was the doctor’s business to encourage the bashful.

“Well, my good man,” said he, brushing off, with the arm of his coat, some dust that had settled on his inexpressibles, “so you want to consult me?”

“Indeed, your honour, I do; but—feel a little awkward in doing so—a stranger and all.”

“Pooh!—medical men are never strangers. I am the friend of every man who requires my assistance.”

“Augh!—and I do require your honour’s assistance very sadly.”

“Well—well—speak out. Anything of long standing?”

“Why, only since we have been here, sir.”

“Oh, that’s all! Well.”

“Your honour’s so good—that—won’t scruple in telling you all. You sees as how we were robbed—master, at least, was—had some little in my pockets—but we poor servants are never too rich. You seems such a kind gentleman—so attentive to master—though you must have felt how disinterested it was to ’tend a man what had been robbed—that I have no hesitation in making bold to ask you to lend us a few guineas, just to help us out with the bill here,—bother!”

“Fellow!” said the doctor, rising, “I don’t know what you mean; but I’d have you to learn that I am not to be cheated out of my time and property! I shall insist upon being paid *my* bill instantly, before I dress your master’s wound once more!”

“Augh!” said the corporal, who was delighted to find the doctor come so immediately into the snare:—“won’t be so cruel, surely!—why, you’ll leave us without a shiner to pay my host here!”

“Nonsense!—Your master, if he’s a gentleman, can write home for money.”

“Ah, sir, all very well to say so; but, between you and me and the bedpost, young master’s quarrelled with old master—old master won’t give him a rap: so I’m sure, since your honour’s a friend to every man who requires your assistance—noble saying, sir!—you won’t refuse us a few guineas. And as for your bill—why——”

“Sir, you’re an impudent vagabond!” cried the doc-

tor, as red as a rose-draught, and flinging out of the room; "and I warn you, that I shall bring in my bill, and expect to be paid within ten minutes."

The doctor waited for no answer—he hurried home, scratched off his account, and flew back with it in as much haste as if his patient had been a month longer under his care, and was consequently on the brink of that happier world, where, since the inhabitants are immortal, it is very evident that doctors, as being useless, are never admitted.

The corporal met him as before.

"There, sir!" cried the doctor, breathlessly; and then putting his arms a-kimbo, "take that to your master, and desire him to pay me instantly."

"Augh! and shall do no such thing."

"You won't?"

"No, for shall pay you myself. Where's your receipt—eh?"

And with great composure the corporal drew out a well-filled purse, and discharged the bill. The doctor was so thunderstricken that he pocketed the money without uttering a word. He consoled himself, however, with the belief that Walter, whom he had tamed into a becoming hypochondria, would be sure to send for him the next morning. Alas for mortal expectations!—the next morning Walter was once more on the road.

CHAPTER II.

New traces of the fate of Geoffrey Lester.—Walter and the Corporal proceed on a fresh expedition.—The Corporal is especially sagacious on the old topic of the World.—His opinions on the men who claim knowledge thereof.—On the advantages enjoyed by a Valet.—On the Science of successful Love.—On Virtue and the Constitution.—On Qualities to be desired in a Mistress, &c.—A Landscape.

This way of talking of his very much enlivens the conversation among us of a more sedate turn.—*Spectator*, No. III.

WALTER found, while he made search himself, that it was no easy matter, in so large a county as Yorkshire, to obtain even the preliminary particulars—viz., the place of residence, and the name of the colonel from India whose dying gift his father had left the house of the worthy Courtland to claim and receive. But the moment he committed the inquiry to the care of an active and intelligent lawyer, the case seemed to brighten up prodigiously; and Walter was shortly informed that a Colonel Elmore, who had been in India, had died in the year 17—: that by a reference to his will it appeared that he had left to Daniel Clarke the sum of a thousand pounds, and the house in which he resided before his death; the latter being

merely leasehold, at a high rent, was specified in the will to be of small value : it was situated in the outskirts of Knaresborough. It was also discovered that a Mr Jonas Elmore, the only surviving executor of the will, and a distant relation of the deceased colonel's, lived about fifty miles from York, and could, in all probability, better than any one, afford Walter those farther particulars of which he was so desirous to be informed. Walter immediately proposed to his lawyer to accompany him to this gentleman's house ; but it so happened that the lawyer could not, for three or four days, leave his business at York ; and Walter, exceedingly impatient to proceed on the intelligence thus granted him, and disliking the meagre information obtained from letters, when a personal interview could be obtained, resolved himself to repair to Mr Jonas Elmore's without farther delay. And behold, therefore, our worthy corporal and his master again mounted, and commencing a new journey.

The corporal, always fond of adventure, was in high spirits.

“ See, sir,” said he to his master, patting with great affection the neck of his steed—“ see, sir, how brisk the creturs are ; what a deal of good their long rest at York city's done 'em ! Ah, your honour, what a fine town that ere be !—Yet,” added the corporal, with an air of great superiority, “ it gives you no notion of Lunnun like ; on the faith of a man, no ! ”

“ Well, Bunting, perhaps we may be in London within a month hence.”

“ And, afore we gets there, your honour—no offence—but should like to give you some advice ; ’tis ticklish place, that Lunnun ; and though you be by no manner of means deficient in genus, yet, sir, *you be* young, and *I be*—”

“ *Old* ;—true, Bunting,” added Walter, very gravely.

“ Augh—bother ! old, sir ! old, sir ! A man in the prime of life—hair coal black (bating a few grey ones that have had since twenty—care, and military service, sir)—carriage straight—teeth strong—not an ail in the world, bating the rheumatics—is not old, sir—not by no manner of means—baugh !”

“ You are very right, Bunting : when I said old, I meant experienced. I assure you I shall be very grateful for your advice ; and suppose, while we walk our horses up this hill, you begin lecture the first. London’s a fruitful subject : all you can say on it will not be soon exhausted.”

“ Ah, may well say that,” replied the corporal, exceedingly flattered with the permission he had obtained ; “ and anything my poor wit can suggest, quite at your honour’s sarvice — éhem, hem ! You must know by Lunnun I means the world, and by the world means Lunnun ; know one — know t’other. But ’tis not them as affects to be most knowing as be so at bottom. Begging your honour’s pardon, I thinks gentlefolks what lives only with gentlefolks, and calls themselves men of the world, be often no wiser nor Pagan creturs, and live in a Gentile darkness.”

“The true knowledge of the world,” said Walter, “is only then for the corporals of the Forty-second—eh, Bunting?”

“As to that, sir,” quoth the corporal, “’tis not being of this calling or of that calling that helps one on; ’tis an inborn sort of genius, the talent of obsarving, and growing wise by obsarving. One picks up crumb here, crumb there; but if one has not good digestion, Lord, what sinnifies a feast? Healthy man thrives on a ’tato, sickly looks pale on a haunch. You sees, your honour, as I said afore, I was own sarvant to Colonel Dysart; he was a lord’s nephly, a very gay gentleman, and great hand with the ladies—not a man more in the world;—so I had the opportunity of larning what’s what among the best set; at his honour’s expense, too—augh! To my mind, sir, there is not a place from which a man has a better view of things than the bit carpet behind a gentleman’s chair. The gentleman eats, and talks, and swears, and jests, and plays cards, and makes loves, and tries to cheat, and is cheated, and his man stands behind with his eyes and ears open—augh!”

“One should go into service to learn diplomacy, I see,” said Walter, greatly amused.

“Does not know what ’plomacy be, sir, but knows it would be better for many a young master nor all the colleges;—would not be so many bubbles if my lord could take a turn now and then with John. A-well, sir! how I used to laugh in my sleeve like, when I saw my master, who was thought the knowingest gen-

tleman about Court, taken in every day smack afore my face. There was one lady whom he had tried hard, as he thought, to get away from her husband ; and he used to be so mighty pleased at every glance from her brown eyes—and be d—d to them !—and so careful the husband should not see—so pluming himself on his discretion here, and his conquest there—when, Lord bless you, it was all settled 'twixt man and wife aforehand ! And while the colonel laughed at the cuckold, the cuckold laughed at the dupe. For you see, sir, as how the colonel was a rich man, and the jewels as he bought for the lady went half into the husband's pocket—he ! he ! That's the way of the world, sir—that's the way of the world !”

“ Upon my word, you draw a very bad picture of the world : you colour highly ; and by the way, I observe that whenever you find any man committing a roguish action, instead of calling him a scoundrel, you show those great teeth of yours, and chuckle out, ‘ A man of the world ! a man of the world ! ’ ”

“ To be sure, your honour ; the proper name, too. 'Tis your greenhorns who fly into a passion, and use hard words. You see, sir, there's one thing we larn afore all other things in the world—to butter bread. Knowledge of others means only the knowledge which side bread's buttered. In short, sir, the wiser grow, the more take care of oursels. Some persons make a mistake, and, in trying to take care of themsels, run neck into halter—baugh ! they are not rascals—they are *would-be* men of the world. Others be more pru-

dent (for, as I said afore, sir, discretion is a pair of stirrups); *they* be the true men of the world."

"I should have thought," said Walter, "that the knowledge of the world might be that knowledge which preserves us from being cheated, but not that which enables us to cheat."

"Augh!" quoth the corporal, with that sort of smile with which you see an old philosopher put down a high-sounding error from a young disciple who flatters himself he has uttered something prodigiously fine—"augh! and did I not tell you, t'other day, to look at the professions, your honour? What would a laryer be if he did not know how to cheat a witness and humbug a jury?—knows he is lying: why is he lying? for love of his fees, or his fame like, which gets fees;—augh! is not that cheating others? The doctor, too—Master Fillgrave, for instance?"

"Say no more of doctors; I abandon them to your satire, without a word."

"The lying knaves! Don't they say one's well when one's ill—ill when one's well?—profess to know what don't know? thrust solemn phizzes into every abomination, as if larning lay hid in a ——? and all for their neighbour's money, or their own reputation, which makes money—augh! In short, sir, look where will, impossible to see so much cheating allowed, praised, encouraged, and feel very angry with a cheat who has only made a mistake. But when I sees a man butter his bread carefully—knife steady—butter thick, and hungry fellows looking on and licking chaps—mothers

stopping their brats : ' See, child, respectable man—how thick his bread's buttered ! pull off your hat to him ; '—when I sees that, my heart warms : there's the *true* man of the world—augh ! ”

“ Well, Bunting,” said Walter, laughing, “ though you are thus lenient to those unfortunate gentlemen whom others call rogues, and thus laudatory of gentlemen who are at best discreetly selfish, I suppose you admit the possibility of virtue, and your heart warms as much when you see a man of worth as when you see a man of the world ? ”

“ Why, you knows, your honour,” answered the corporal, “ so far as vartue's concerned, there's a deal in constitution ; but as for knowledge of the world, one gets it oneself ! ”

“ I don't wonder, Bunting—as your opinion of women is much the same as your opinion of men—that you are still unmarried.”

“ Augh ! but your honour mistakes ; I am no mice-and-trope. Men are neither one thing nor t'other, neither good nor bad. A prudent parson has nothing to fear from 'em, nor a foolish one anything to gain—baugh ! As to the women creturs, your honour, as I said, vartue's a deal in the constitution. Would not ask what a lassie's mind be, nor what her eddycation ; but see what her habits be, that's all—habits and constitution all one—play into one another's hands.”

“ And what sort of signs, Bunting, would you mostly esteem in a lady ? ”

“ First place, sir, woman I'd marry must not mope

when alone ! must be able to 'muse herself—must be easily 'mused. That's a great sign, sir, of an innocent mind, to be tickled with straws. Besides, employment keeps 'em out of harm's way. Second place, should observe if she was very fond of places, your honour—sorry to move—that's a sure sign she won't tire easily ; but that if she like you now from fancy, she'll like you by-and-by from custom. Thirdly, your honour, she should not be averse to dress—a leaning that way shows she has a desire to please : people who don't care about pleasing, always sullen. Fourthly, she must bear to be crossed—I'd be quite sure that she might be contradicted, without mumping or storming : 'cause then, you knows, your honour, if she wanted anything expensive, need not give it—augh ! Fifthly, must not set up for a saint, your honour ; they pye-house she-creturs always thinks themsels so much better nor we men ; don't understand our language and ways, your honour : they wants us not only to belave, but to tremble—bother ! ”

“ I like your description well enough, on the whole,” said Walter ; “ and when I look out for a wife, I shall come to you for advice.”

“ Your honour may have it already—Miss Ellinor's jist the thing.”

Walter turned away his head, and told Bunting, with great show of indignation, not to be a fool.

The corporal, who was not quite certain of his ground here, but who knew that Madeline, at all events, was going to be married to Aram, and deemed it, there-

fore, quite useless to waste any praise upon *her*, thought that a few random shots of eulogium were worth throwing away on a chance, and consequently continued—

“Augh, your honour—’tis not ’cause I have eyes that I be’s a fool. Miss Ellinor and your honour be only cousins, to be sure ; but more like brother and sister nor anything else. Howsomever, she’s a rare cretur, whoever gets her ; has a face that puts one in good humour with the world, if one sees it first thing in the morning ; ’tis as good as the sun in July—augh ! but as I was saying, your honour, ’bout the women creturs in general——”

“Enough of them, Bunting ; let us suppose you have been so fortunate as to find one to suit you—how would you woo her ? Of course there are certain secrets of courtship which you will not hesitate to impart to one who, like me, wants such assistance from art, much more than you can do, who are so bountifully favoured by nature.”

“As to nature,” replied the corporal, with considerable modesty, for he never disputed the truth of the compliment, “’tis not ’cause a man be six feet without’s shoes that he’s any nearer to lady’s heart. Sir, I will own to you, howsomever it makes ’gainst your honour and myself, for that matter—that don’t think one is a bit more lucky with the ladies for being so handsome ! ’Tis all very well with them ere willing ones, your honour—caught at a glance ; but as for the better sort, one’s beauty’s all bother ! Why, sir, when we see some of the most fortunatest men among she-

creturs—what poor little minnikens they be! One's a dwarf—another knock-kneed—a third squints—and a fourth might be shown for a *hape*! Neither, sir, is it your soft, insinivating, die-away youths, as seem at first so seductive; they do very well for lovers, your honour; but then its always rejected ones! Neither, your honour, does the art of succeeding with the ladies 'quire all those finniken nimini-pinimis, flourishes, and maxims, and saws, which the colonel, my old master, and the great gentlefolks, as be knowing, call the art of love—baugh! the whole science, sir, consists in these two rules—'Ax soon, and ax often.' ”

“There seems no great difficulty in them, Bunting.”

“Not to us who has gumption, sir: but then there is summat in the manner of axing—one can't be too hot—can't flatter too much—and, above all, one must never take a refusal. There, sir, now—if you takes my advice—may break the peace of all the husbands in Lunnun—bother—whaugh!”

“My uncle little knows what a praiseworthy tutor he has secured me in you, Bunting,” said Walter, laughing; “and now, while the road is so good, let us make the most of it.”

As they had set out late in the day, and the corporal was fearful of another attack from a hedge, he resolved that, about evening, one of the horses should be seized with a sudden lameness (which he effected by slyly inserting a stone between the shoe and the hoof), that required immediate attention and a night's rest; so that it was not till the early noon of the next

day that our travellers entered the village in which Mr Jonas Elmore resided.

It was a soft tranquil day, though one of the very last in October; for the reader will remember that time had not stood still during Walter's submission to the care of Mr Pertinax Fillgrave, and his subsequent journey and researches.

The sunlight rested on a broad patch of green heath, covered with furze, and around it were scattered the cottages and farm-houses of the little village. On the other side, as Walter descended the gentle hill that led into this remote hamlet, wide and flat meadows, interspersed with several fresh and shaded ponds, stretched away towards a belt of rich woodland gorgeous with the melancholy pomp by which the "regal year" seeks to veil its decay. Among these meadows you might now see groups of cattle quietly grazing, or standing half hid in the still and sheltered pools. Still farther, crossing to the woods, a solitary sportsman walked careless on, surrounded by some half-a-dozen spaniels, and the shrill small tongue of one younger straggler of the canine crew, who had broken incredulously from the rest, and already entered the wood, might be just heard, softened down by the distance, into a wild, cheery sound, that animated, without disturbing, the serenity of the scene.

"After all," said Walter aloud, "the scholar was right—there is nothing like the country !

' O happiness of sweet retired content,
To be at once secure and innocent ! ' "

“Be them verses in the psalms, sir?” said the corporal, who was close behind.

“No, Bunting; but they were written by one who, if I recollect right, set the Psalms to verse.* I hope they meet with your approbation?”

“Indeed, sir, and no—since they ben’t in the Psalms.”

“And why, Mr Critic?”

“’Cause what’s the use of security, if one’s innocent, and does not mean to take advantage of it?—baugh! One does not lock the door for nothing, your honour!”

“You shall enlarge on that honest doctrine of yours another time; meanwhile, call that shepherd, and ask the way to Mr Elmore’s.”

The corporal obeyed, and found that a clump of trees, at the farther corner of the waste land, was the grove that surrounded Mr Elmore’s house: a short canter across the heath brought them to a white gate, and having passed this, a comfortable brick mansion, of moderate size, stood before them.

* Denham.

CHAPTER III.

A Scholar, but of a different mould from the Student of Grassdale.
—New particulars concerning Geoffrey Lester.—The journey recommenced.

Inscuitque
Libris.*—*Horat.*
Volat, ambiguus
Mobils alis, Hora.†—*Seneca.*

UPON inquiring for Mr Elmore, Walter was shown into a handsome library, that appeared well stocked with books, of that good old-fashioned size and solidity which are now fast passing from the world, or at least shrinking into old shops and public collections. The time may come when the mouldering remains of a folio will attract as much philosophical astonishment as the bones of the mammoth. For behold, the deluge of writers hath produced a new world of small octavo ! and in the next generation, thanks to the popular libraries, we shall only vibrate between the duodecimo and the diamond edition. Nay, we foresee the time when a very handsome collection may be carried about in one's waistcoat-pocket, and a whole library of the

* And he hath grown old in books.

† Time flies, still moving on uncertain wing.

British Classics be neatly arranged in a well-compacted snuff-box.

In a few minutes Mr Elmore made his appearance : he was a short, well-built man, about the age of fifty. Contrary to the established mode, he wore no wig, and was very bald ; except at the sides of the head, and a little circular island of hair in the centre. But this defect was rendered the less visible by a profusion of powder. He was dressed with evident care and precision ; a snuff-coloured coat was adorned with a respectable profusion of gold lace ; his breeches were of plum-coloured satin ; his salmon-coloured stockings, scrupulously drawn up, displayed a very handsome calf ; and a pair of steel buckles, in his high-heeled and square-toed shoes, were polished into a lustre which almost rivalled the splendour of diamonds. Mr Jonas Elmore was a beau, a wit, and a scholar of the old school. He abounded in jests, in quotations, in smart sayings, and pertinent anecdotes ; but, withal, his classical learning (out of the classics he knew little enough) was at once elegant, but wearisome ; pedantic, but profound.

To this gentleman Walter presented a letter of introduction which he had obtained from a distinguished clergyman in York. Mr Elmore received it with a profound salutation :—

“Aha, from my friend, Dr Hebraist,” said he, glancing at the seal : “a most worthy man and a ripe scholar. I presume at once, sir, from his introduction, that you yourself have cultivated the *litteras*

humaniores. Pray sit down—ay, I see, you take up a book—an excellent symptom; it gives me an immediate insight into your character. But you have chanced, sir, on light reading—one of the Greek novels, I think: you must not judge of my studies by such a specimen.”

“Nevertheless, sir, it does not seem to my unskilful eye very easy Greek.”

“Pretty well, sir, barbarous, but amusing—pray continue it. The triumphal entry of Paulus Emilius is not ill told. I confess that I think novels might be made much higher works than they have been yet. Doubtless, you remember what Aristotle says concerning painters and sculptors, ‘that they teach and recommend virtue in a more efficacious and powerful manner than philosophers by their dry precepts, and are more capable of amending the vicious than the best moral lessons without such aid.’ But how much more, sir, can a good novelist do this than the best sculptor or painter in the world! Every one can be charmed by a fine novel, few by a fine painting. ‘*Docti rationem artis intelligunt, indocti voluptatem.*’* A happy sentence that in Quinctilian, sir, is it not? But, bless me, I am forgetting the letter of my good friend, Dr Hebraist. The charms of your conversation carry me away. And, indeed, I have seldom the happiness to meet a gentleman so well informed as yourself. I confess, sir, that I still retain the

* The learned understand the reason of art, the unlearned the pleasure.

tastes of my boyhood ; the muses cradled my childhood, they now smooth the pillow on my footstool—*Quem tu, Melpomene, &c.* You are not yet subject to gout, *dira podagra*. By the way, how is the worthy doctor, since his attack? Ah, see now, if you have not still, by your delightful converse, kept me from his letter—yet, positively I need no introduction to you. Apollo has already presented you to me. And as for the doctor's letter, I will read it after dinner ; for as Seneca——”

“I beg your pardon a thousand times, sir,” said Walter, who began to despair of ever coming to the matter, which seemed lost sight of beneath this battery of erudition ; “but you will find by Dr Hebraist's letter, that it is only on business of the utmost importance that I have presumed to break in upon the learned leisure of Mr Jonas Elmore.”

“Business,” replied Mr Elmore, producing his spectacles, and deliberately placing them athwart his nose,

“ ‘ His mane edictum, post prandia Callirhoën, ’ &c.

Business in the morning, and the ladies after dinner. Well, sir, I will yield to you in the one, and you must yield to me in the other : I will open the letter, and you shall dine here, and be introduced to Mrs Elmore. What is your opinion of the modern method of folding letters? I—but I see you are impatient.” Here Mr Elmore at length broke the seal ; and, to Walter's great joy, fairly read the contents within.

“ Oh ! I see, I see ! ” said he, refolding the epistle,

and placing it in his pocket-book ; “ my friend, Dr Hebraist, says you are anxious to be informed whether Mr Clarke ever received the legacy of my poor cousin, Colonel Elmore ; and if so, any tidings I can give you of Mr Clarke himself, or any clue to discover him, will be highly acceptable. I gather, sir, from my friend’s letter, that this is the substance of your business with me, *caput negotii* ;—although, like Timanthes the painter, he leaves more to be understood than is described, ‘ *intelligitur plus quam pingitur*,’ as Pliny has it.”

“ Sir,” said Walter, drawing his chair close to Mr Elmore, and his anxiety forcing itself to his countenance, “ that is indeed the substance of my business with you ; and so important will be any information you can give me, that I shall esteem it a——”

“ Not a very great favour, eh ?—not very great ! ”

“ Yes, indeed, a very great obligation.”

“ I hope not, sir ; for what says Tacitus, that profound reader of the human heart ?—‘ *beneficia eo usque læta sunt*,’ &c. ; favours easily repaid beget affection—favours beyond return engender hatred. But, sir, a truce to trifling ;” and here Mr Elmore composed his countenance, and changed—which he could do at will, so that the change was not expected to last long—the pedant for the man of business.

“ Mr Clarke did receive his legacy : the lease of the house at Knaresborough was also sold by his desire, and produced the sum of seven hundred and fifty pounds, which being added to the farther sum of a thousand

pounds, which was bequeathed to him, amounted to seventeen hundred and fifty pounds. It so happened that my cousin had possessed some very valuable jewels, which were bequeathed to myself. I, sir, studious, and a cultivator of the Muse, had no love and no use for these baubles; I preferred barbaric gold to barbaric pearl; and knowing that Clarke had been in India, whence these jewels had been brought, I showed them to him, and consulted his knowledge on these matters as to the best method of obtaining a sale. He offered to purchase them of me, under the impression that he could turn them to a profitable speculation in London. Accordingly we came to terms: I sold the greater part of them to him for a sum a little exceeding a thousand pounds. He was pleased with his bargain; and came to borrow the rest of me, in order to look at them more considerately at home, and determine whether or not he should buy them also. Well, sir (but here comes the remarkable part of the story), about three days after this last event, Mr Clarke and my jewels both disappeared in rather a strange and abrupt manner. In the middle of the night he left his lodging at Knaresborough and never returned; neither himself nor my jewels were ever heard of more!"

"Good heavens!" exclaimed Walter, greatly agitated; "what was supposed to be the cause of his disappearance?"

"That," replied Elmore, "was never positively traced. It excited great surprise and great conjecture

at the time. Advertisements and handbills were circulated throughout the country, but in vain. Mr Clarke was evidently a man of eccentric habits, of a hasty temper, and a wandering manner of life ; yet it is scarcely probable that he took this sudden manner of leaving the country, either from whim or some secret but honest motive never divulged. The fact is, that he owed a few debts in the town—that he had my jewels in his possession, and as (pardon me for saying this, since you take an interest in him) his connections were entirely unknown in these parts, and his character not very highly estimated (whether from his manner, or his conversation, or some undefined and vague rumours, I cannot say), it was considered by no means improbable that he had decamped with his property in this sudden manner in order to save himself that trouble of settling accounts which a more seemly and public method of departure might have rendered necessary. A man of the name of Houseman, with whom he was acquainted (a resident in Knaresborough), declared that Clarke had borrowed rather a considerable sum from him, and did not scruple openly to accuse him of the evident design to avoid repayment. A few more dark but utterly groundless conjectures were afloat ; and since the closest search, the minutest inquiry, was employed without any result, the supposition that he might have been robbed and murdered was strongly entertained for some time ; but as his body was never found, nor suspicion directed against any particular

person, these conjectures insensibly died away ; and, being so complete a stranger to these parts, the very circumstance of his disappearance was not likely to occupy for very long the attention of that old gossip the Public, who, even in the remotest parts, has a thousand topics to fill up her time and talk. And now, sir, I think you know as much of the particulars of the case as any one in these parts can inform you."

We may imagine the various sensations which this unsatisfactory intelligence caused in the adventurous son of the lost wanderer. He continued to throw out additional guesses, and to make farther inquiries concerning a tale which seemed to him so mysterious, but without effect ; and he had the mortification to perceive that the shrewd Jonas was, in his own mind, fully convinced that the permanent disappearance of Clarke was accounted for only by the most dishonest motives.

"And," added Elmore, "I am confirmed in this belief by discovering afterwards, from a tradesman in York who had seen my cousin's jewels, that those I had trusted to Mr Clarke's hands were more valuable than I had imagined them, and therefore it was probably worth his while to make off with them as quietly as possible. He went on foot, leaving his horse, a sorry nag, to settle with me and the other claimants :—

‘ I, pedes quo te rapiunt et auræ ! ’*

* Go where your feet and fortune take you.

“Heavens!” thought Walter, sinking back in his chair sickened and disheartened, “what a parent, if the opinions of all men who knew him be true, do I thus zealously seek to recover!”

The good-natured Elmore, perceiving the unwelcome and painful impression his account had produced on his young guest, now exerted himself to remove or at least to lessen it; and turning the conversation into a classical channel, which to him was the Lethe to all cares, he soon forgot that Clarke had ever existed, in expatiating on the unappreciated excellences of Propertius, who, to his mind, was the most tender of all elegiac poets, solely because he was the most learned. Fortunately this vein of conversation, however tedious to Walter, preserved him from the necessity of rejoinder, and left him to the quiet enjoyment of his own gloomy and restless reflections.

At length the time touched upon dinner: Elmore, starting up, adjourned to the drawing-room, in order to present the handsome stranger to the *placens uxor*—the pleasing wife, whom, in passing through the hall, he eulogised with an amazing felicity of diction.

The object of these praises was a tall, meagre lady, in a yellow dress carried up to the chin, and who added a slight squint to the charms of red hair, ill concealed by powder, and the dignity of a prodigiously high nose.

“There is nothing, sir,” said Elmore—“nothing, believe me, like matrimonial felicity. Julia, my dear, I trust the chickens will not be overdone.”

“Indeed, Mr Elmore, I cannot tell; I did not boil them.”

“Sir,” said Elmore, turning to his guest, “I do not know whether you will agree with me, but I think a slight tendency to gourmandism is absolutely necessary to complete the character of a truly classical mind. So many beautiful touches are there in the ancient poets—so many delicate allusions in history and in anecdote relating to the gratification of the palate, that, if a man have no correspondent sympathy with the illustrious epicures of old, he is rendered incapable of enjoying the most beautiful passages that—— Come, sir, the dinner is served:—

‘Nutrimus lautis mollissima corpora mensis.’* *

As they crossed the hall to the dining-room, a young lady, whom Elmore hastily announced as his only daughter, appeared descending the stairs, having evidently retired for the purpose of rearranging her attire for the conquest of the stranger. There was something in Miss Elmore that reminded Walter of Ellinor, and as the likeness struck him, he felt, by the sudden and involuntary sigh it occasioned, how much the image of his cousin had lately gained ground upon his heart.

Nothing of any note occurred during dinner, until the appearance of the second course, when Elmore, throwing himself back with an air of content, which signified that the first edge of his appetite was blunted, observed—

* We nourish softest bodies at luxurious banquets.

“Sir, the second course I always opine to be the more dignified and rational part of a repast—

‘*Quod nunc ratio est, impetus ante fuit.*’”*

“Ah! Mr Elmore,” said the lady, glancing towards a brace of very fine pigeons, “I cannot tell you how vexed I am at a mistake of the gardener’s; you remember my poor pet pigeons, so attached to each other—would not mix with the rest—quite an inseparable friendship, Mr Lester—well, they were killed, by mistake, for a couple of vulgar pigeons. Ah! I could not touch a bit of them for the world.”

“My love,” said Elmore, pausing, and with great solemnity, “hear how beautiful a consolation is afforded to you in Valerius Maximus:—‘*Ubi idem et maximus et honestissimus amor est, aliquando præstat morte jungi quam vitâ distrahi!*’ which, being interpreted, means, that wherever, as in the case of your pigeons, a thoroughly high and sincere affection exists, it is sometimes better to be joined in death than divided in life.—Give me half the fatter one, if you please, Julia.”

“Sir,” said Elmore, when the ladies withdrew, “I cannot tell you how pleased I am to meet with a gentleman so deeply imbued with classic lore. I remember, several years ago, before my poor cousin died, it was my lot, when I visited him at Knaresborough, to hold some delightful conversations on learned matters with a very rising young scholar who then resided at Knaresborough—Eugene Aram. Conversations as difficult to

* That which is now reason, at first was but desire.

obtain as delightful to remember, for he was exceedingly reserved."

"Aram!" repeated Walter.

"What! you know him then?—and where does he live now?"

"In ——, very near my uncle's residence. He is certainly a remarkable man."

"Yes, indeed, he promised to become so. At the time I refer to he was poor to penury, and haughty as poor; but it was wonderful to note the iron energy with which he pursued his progress to learning. Never did I see a youth—at that time he was no more—so devoted to knowledge for itself.

*'Doctrinæ pretium triste magister habet.'**

"Methinks," added Elmore, "I can see him now, stealing away from the haunts of men,

'With even step and musing gait,'

across the quiet fields, or into the woods, whence he was certain not to reappear till nightfall. Ah! he was a strange and solitary being, but full of genius, and promise of bright things hereafter. I have often heard since of his fame as a scholar, but could never learn where he lived, or what was now his mode of life. Is he yet married?"

"Not yet, I believe: but he is not now so absolutely poor as you describe him to have been then, though certainly far from rich."

* The master has but sorry remuneration for his teaching.

“Yes, yes, I remember that he received a legacy from a relation shortly before he left Knaresborough. He had very delicate health at that time: has he grown stronger with increasing years?”

“He does not complain of ill-health. And pray, was he then of the same austere and blameless habits of life that he now professes?”

“Nothing *could* be so faultless as his character appeared; the passions of youth (ah! *I* was a wild fellow at his age) never seemed to venture near one—

‘Quem casto erudit docta Minerva sinu.’*

Well, I am surprised he has not married. We scholars, sir, fall in love with abstractions, and fancy the first woman we see is ——. Sir, let us drink—the ladies.”

The next day Walter, having resolved to set out for Knaresborough, directed his course towards that town; he thought it yet possible that he might, by strict personal inquiry, continue the clue that Elmore’s account had, to present appearance, broken. The pursuit in which he was engaged, combined, perhaps, with the early disappointment to his affections, had given a grave and solemn tone to a mind naturally ardent and elastic. His character acquired an earnestness and a dignity from late events; and all that once had been hope within him, deepened into thought. As now, on a gloomy and clouded day, he pursued his course along a bleak and melancholy road, his mind was filled with that dark presentiment—that shadow from the coming

* Whom wise Minerva taught with bosom chaste.

event, which superstition believes the herald of the more tragic discoveries or the more fearful incidents of life: he felt steeled, and prepared for some dread *dénoûment* to a journey to which the hand of Providence seemed to conduct his steps; and he looked on the shroud that Time casts over all beyond the present moment with the same intense and painful resolve with which, in the tragic representations of life, we await the drawing-up of the curtain before the last act, which contains the catastrophe, that, while we long, we half shudder to behold.

Meanwhile, in following the adventures of Walter Lester, we have greatly outstripped the progress of events at Grassdale, and thither we now return.

CHAPTER IV.

Aram's Departure.—Madeline.—Exaggeration of Sentiment natural in Love.—Madeline's Letter.—Walter's.—The Walk.—Two very different Persons, yet both Inmates of the same country village.—The Humours of Life, and its dark Passions, are found in juxtaposition everywhere.

Her thoughts, as pure as the chaste morning's breath,
When from the Night's cold arms it creeps away,
Were clothed in words.—*Detraction Excorated*, by SIR J. SUCKLING.

Urticæ proxima sæpe rosa est.* —OVID.

“You positively leave us then, to-day, Eugene?” said the squire.

“Indeed,” answered Aram, “I hear from my creditor (now no longer so, thanks to you) that my relation is so dangerously ill, that, if I have any wish to see her alive, I have not an hour to lose. It is the last surviving relative I have in the world.”

“I can say no more, then,” rejoined the squire, shrugging his shoulders. “When do you expect to return?”

“At least before the day fixed for the wedding,” answered Aram, with a grave and melancholy smile.

“Well, can you find time, think you, to call at the

* The rose is often nearest to the nettle.

lodging in which my nephew proposed to take up his abode—*my* old lodging?—I will give you the address—and inquire if Walter has been heard of there: I confess that I feel considerable alarm on his account. Since that short and hurried letter which I read to you, I have heard nothing of him.”

“You may rely on my seeing him if in London, and faithfully reporting to you all that I can learn towards removing your anxiety.”

“I do not doubt it; no heart is so kind as yours, Eugene. You will not depart without receiving the additional sum you are entitled to claim from me, since you think it may be useful to you in London, should you find a favourable opportunity of increasing your annuity. And now I will no longer detain you from taking your leave of Madeline.”

The plausible story which Aram had invented, of the illness and approaching death of his last living relation, was readily believed by the simple family to whom it was told; and Madeline herself checked her tears, that she might not, for *his* sake, sadden a departure that seemed inevitable. Aram accordingly repaired to London that day—the one that followed the night which witnessed his fearful visit to the Devil’s Crag.

It is precisely at this part of my history that I love to pause for a moment; a sort of breathing interval between the cloud that has been long gathering, and the storm that is about to burst. And this interval is not without its fleeting gleam of quiet and holy sunshine.

It was Madeline's first absence from her lover since their vows had plighted them to each other ; and that first absence, when softened by so many hopes as smiled upon her, is perhaps one of the most touching passages in the history of a woman's love. It is marvellous how many things, unheeded before, suddenly become dear. She then feels what a power of consecration there was in the mere presence of the one beloved ; the spot he touched, the book he read, have become a part of him—are no longer inanimate—are inspired, and have a being and a voice. And the heart, too, soothed in discovering so many new treasures, and opening so delightful a world of memory, is not yet acquainted with that weariness—that sense of exhaustion and solitude, which are the true pains of absence, and belong to the absence, not of hope, but regret.

“You are cheerful, dear Madeline,” said Ellinor, “though you did not think it possible, and he not here !”

“I am occupied,” replied Madeline, “in discovering how much I loved him.”

We do wrong when we censure a certain exaggeration in the sentiments of those who love. True passion is necessarily heightened by its very ardour to an elevation that seems extravagant only to those who cannot feel it. The lofty language of a hero is a part of his character ; without that largeness of idea he had not been a hero. With love, it is the same as with glory : what common minds would call natural in sentiment, merely because it is homely, is not natural, except to tamed

affections. That is a very poor, nay, a very coarse, love, in which the imagination makes not the greater part. And the Frenchman who censured the love of his mistress because it *was* so mixed with the imagination, quarrelled with the body for the soul which inspired and preserved it.

Yet we do not say that Madeline was so possessed by the confidence of her love, that she did not admit the intrusion of a single doubt or fear. When she recalled the frequent gloom and moody fitfulness of her lover—his strange and mysterious communings with self—the sorrow which, at times, as on that Sabbath eve when he wept upon her bosom, appeared suddenly to come upon a nature so calm and stately, and without a visible cause ; when she recalled all these symptoms of a heart not now at rest, it was not possible for her to reject altogether a certain vague and dreary apprehension. Nor did she herself, although to Ellinor she so affected, ascribe this cloudiness and caprice of mood merely to the result of a solitary and meditative life ; she attributed them to the influence of an early grief, perhaps linked with the affections, and did not doubt but that one day or another she should learn the secret. As for remorse—the memory of any former sin—a life so austere and blameless, a disposition so prompt to the activity of good, and so enamoured of its beauty—a mind so cultivated, a temper so gentle, and a heart so easily moved—all would have forbidden, to natures far more suspicious than Madeline's, the conception of such a thought. And so, with a patient

gladness, though not without some mixture of anxiety, she suffered herself to glide onward to a future, which, come cloud, come shine, was, she believed at least, to be shared with him.

On looking over the various papers from which I have woven this tale, I find a letter from Madeline to Aram, dated at this time. The characters, traced in the delicate and fair Italian hand coveted at that period, are fading, and in one part wholly obliterated by time ; but there seems to me so much of what is genuine in the heart's beautiful romance in this effusion, that I will lay it before the reader without adding or altering a word :—

“Thank you—thank you, dearest Eugene !—I have received, then, the first letter you ever wrote to me. I cannot tell you how strange it seemed to me, and how agitated I felt, on seeing it ; more so, I think, than if it had been yourself who had returned. However, when the first delight of reading it faded away, I found that it had not made me so happy as it ought to have done—as I thought at first it had done. You seem sad and melancholy ; a certain nameless gloom appears to me to hang over your whole letter. It affects my spirits—why, I know not—and my tears fall, even while I read the assurances of your unaltered, unalterable love : and yet this assurance your Madeline—vain girl !—never for a moment disbelieves. I have often read and often heard of the distrust and jealousy that accompany love ; but I think that such a

love must be a vulgar and low sentiment. To me there seems a religion in love, and its very foundation is in faith. You say, dearest, that the noise and stir of the great city oppress and weary you even more than you had expected. You say those harsh faces, in which business, and care, and avarice, and ambition, write their lineaments, are wholly unfamiliar to you; you turn aside to avoid them; you wrap yourself up in your solitary feelings of aversion to those you see, and you call upon those not present—upon your Madeline! And would that your Madeline were with you! It seems to me—perhaps you will smile when I say this—that I alone can understand you—I alone can read your heart and your emotions; and, oh! dearest Eugene, that I could read also enough of your past history to know all that has cast so habitual a shadow over that lofty heart and that calm and profound nature! You smile when I ask you; but sometimes you sigh,—and the sigh pleases and soothes me better than the smile.

“We have heard nothing more of Walter, and my father continues to be seriously alarmed about him. Your account, too, corroborates that alarm. It is strange that he has not yet visited London, and that you can obtain no clue of him. He is evidently still in search of his lost parent, and following some obscure and uncertain track. Poor Walter! God speed him! The singular fate of his father, and the many conjectures respecting him, have, I believe, preyed on Walter’s mind more than he

acknowledged. Ellinor found a paper in his closet, where we had occasion to search the other day for something belonging to my father, which was scribbled with all the various fragments of guess or information concerning my uncle, obtained from time to time, and interspersed with some remarks by Walter himself that affected me strangely. It seems to have been, from early childhood, the one desire of my cousin to discover his father's fate. Perhaps the discovery may be already made ;—perhaps my long-lost uncle may yet be present at our wedding.

“ You ask me, Eugene, if I still pursue my botanical researches. Sometimes I do ; but the flower now has no fragrance, and the herb no secret, that I care for ; and astronomy, which you had just begun to teach me, pleases me more ; the flowers charm me when you are present ; but the stars speak to me of you in absence. Perhaps it would not be so had I loved a being less exalted than you. Every one—even my father, even Ellinor—smile when they observe how incessantly I think of you—how utterly you have become all in all to me. I could not *tell* this to you, though I write it : is it not strange that letters should be more faithful than the tongue ? And even *your* letter, mournful as it is, seems to me kinder, and dearer, and more full of yourself, than, with all the magic of your language, and the silver sweetness of your voice, your spoken words are. I walked by your house yesterday ; the windows were closed ; there was a strange air of lifelessness and dejection about it. Do you remember the evening in

which I first entered that house? Do you—or, rather, is there one hour in which it is not present to you? For me, I live in the past—it is the present (which is without you) in which I have no life. I passed into the little garden, that with your own hands you have planted for me, and filled with flowers. Ellinor was with me, and she saw my lips move. She asked me what I was saying to myself. I would not tell her;—I was praying for you, my kind, my beloved Eugene. I was praying for the happiness of your future years—praying that I might requite your love. Whenever I feel the most, I am the most inclined to prayer. Sorrow, joy, tenderness, all emotion, lift up my heart to God. And what a delicious overflow of the heart is prayer! When I am with you—and I feel that you love me—my happiness would be painful, if there were no God whom I might bless for its excess. Do those who believe not love?—have they deep emotions?—can they feel truly—devotedly? Why, when I talk thus to you, do you always answer me with that chilling and mournful smile? You would rest religion only on reason: as well limit love to the reason also!—what were either without the feelings?

“When—when—when will you return? I think I love you now more than ever. I think I have more courage to tell you so. So many things I have to say—so many events to relate. For what is not an event to us? the least incident that has happened to either;—the very fading of a flower, if you have worn it, is a whole history to me.

“Adieu—God bless you! God reward you; God keep your heart with Him, dearest, dearest Eugene. And may you every day know better and better how utterly you are loved by your

“MADELINE.”

The epistle to which Lester referred, as received from Walter, was one written on the day of his escape from Mr Pertinax Fillgrave, a short note rather than letter, which ran as follows :—

“MY DEAR UNCLE,

“I have met with an accident, which confined me to my bed; a rencontre, indeed, with the knights of the road; nothing serious (so do not be alarmed!) though the doctor would fain have made it so. I am just about to recommence my journey, but not towards London; on the contrary, northward.

“I have, partly through the information of your old friend Mr Courtland, partly by accident, found what I hope may prove a clue to the fate of my father. I am now departing to put this hope to the issue. More I would fain say; but, lest the expectation should prove fallacious, I will not dwell on circumstances which would, in that case, only create in you a disappointment similar to my own. Only this take with you, that my father’s proverbial good-luck seems to have visited him since your latest news of his fate; a legacy, though not a large one, awaited his return to England from India: but see if I am not growing prolix already;—I must

break off in order to reserve you the pleasure (may it be so!) of a full surprise!

“God bless you, my dear uncle! I write in spirits and hope. Kindest love to all at home.

“WALTER LESTER.”

“P.S.—Tell Ellinor that my bitterest misfortune, in the adventure I have referred to, was to be robbed of her purse. Will she knit me another? By the way I encountered Sir Peter Hales: such an open-hearted, generous fellow as you said! ‘thereby hangs a tale.’”

This letter, which provoked all the curiosity of our little circle, made them anxiously look forward to every post for additional explanation, but that explanation came not; and they were forced to console themselves with the evident exhilaration under which Walter wrote, and the probable supposition that he delayed farther information until it could be ample and satisfactory. “Knights of the road,” quoth Lester, one day; “I wonder if they were any of the gang that have just visited us. Well, but poor boy! he does not say whether he has any money left; yet, if he *were* short of the gold, he would be very unlike his father (or his uncle, for that matter) had he forgotten to enlarge on that subject, however brief upon others.”

“Probably,” said Ellinor, “the corporal carried the main sum about him in those well-stuffed saddle-bags, and it was only the purse that Walter had about his person that was stolen; and it is clear that the corporal

escaped, as he mentions nothing about that excellent personage."

"A shrewd guess, Nell; but pray, why should Walter carry the purse about him so carefully? Ah, you blush: well, will you knit him another?"

"Pshaw, papa! Good-by; I am going to gather you a nosegay."

But Ellinor was seized with a sudden fit of industry, and, somehow or other, she grew fonder of knitting than ever.

The neighbourhood was now tranquil and at peace: the nightly depredators that had infested the green valleys of Grassdale were heard of no more; it seemed a sudden incursion of fraud and crime, which was too unnatural to the character of the spot invaded to do more than to terrify and to disappear. The *truditur dies die*—the serene steps of one calm day chasing another, returned, and the past alarm was only remembered as a tempting subject of gossip to the villagers, and (at the hall) a theme of eulogium on the courage of Eugene Aram.

"It is a lovely day," said Lester to his daughters as they sat at the window; "come, girls, get your bonnets, and let us take a walk into the village."

"And meet the postman," said Ellinor, archly.

"Yes," rejoined Madeline, in the same vein, but in a whisper, that Lester might not hear; "for who knows but that we may have a letter from Walter?"

How prettily sounds such raillery on virgin lips! No, no! nothing on earth is so lovely as the confidence

between two happy sisters, who have no secrets but those of a guileless love to reveal !

As they strolled into the village they were met by Peter Dealtry, who was slowly riding home on a large ass, who carried himself and his panniers to the neighbouring market in a more quiet and luxurious indolence of action than would the harsher motions of the equine species.

“ A fine day, Peter ; and what news at market ? ” said Lester.

“ Corn high, hay dear, your honour, ” replied the clerk.

“ Ah, I suppose so ; a good time to sell ours, Peter : we must see about it on Saturday. But, pray, have you heard anything from the corporal since his departure ? ”

“ Not I, your honour, not I ; though I think as he might have given us a line, if it was only to thank me for my care of his cat ; but—

‘ They as comes to go to roam,
Thinks slight of they as stays at home. ’ ”

“ A notable distich, Peter ; your own composition, I warrant ! ”

“ Mine ! Lord love your honour, I has no genus, but I has memory ; and when them ere beautiful lines of poetry-like comes into my head, they stays there, and stays till they pops out at my tongue like a bottle of ginger-beer. I do loves poetry, sir, ’ specially the sacred. ”

“ We know it—we know it. ”

“ For there be summut in it, ” continued the clerk,

“which smooths a man’s heart like a clothes-brush, wipes away the dust and dirt, and sets all the nap right: and I thinks as how ’tis what a clerk of the parish ought to study, your honour.”

“Nothing better; you speak like an oracle.”

“Now, sir, there be the corporal, honest man, what thinks himself mighty clever—but he has no soul for varse. Lord love ye, to see the faces he makes when I tells him a hymn or so; ’tis quite wicked, your honour—for that’s what the heathen did, as you well know, sir.

‘And when I does discourse of things
Most holy to their tribe,
What does they do?—they mocks at me,
And makes my harp a gibe.’

Tis not what *I* calls pretty, Miss Ellinor.”

“Certainly not, Peter; I wonder, with your talents for verse, you never indulge in a little satire against such perverse taste.”

“Satire! what’s that? Oh, I knows; what they writes in elections. Why, miss, mayhap——” here Peter paused, and winked significantly—“but the corporal’s a passionate man, you knows: but I could so sting him.—Aha! we’ll see, we’ll see. Do you know, your honour,”—here Peter altered his air to one of serious importance, as if about to impart a most sagacious conjecture,—“I thinks there be one reason why the corporal has not written to me.”

“And what’s that, Peter?”

“’Cause, your honour, he’s ashamed of his writing:

I fancy as how his spelling is no better than it should be,—but mum's the word. You sees, your honour, the corporal's got a tarn for conversation-like; he be a mighty fine talker, *surely!* but he be shy of the pen; 'tis not every man what talks biggest what's the best schollard at bottom. Why, there's the newspaper I saw in the market (for I always sees the newspaper once a-week) says as how some of them great speakers in the parliament house are no better than ninnies when they gets upon paper; and that's the corporal's case, I sispect; I suppose as how they can't spell all them ere long words they make use on. For my part, I think there be mortal desate (deceit) like in that ere public speaking; for I knows how far a loud voice and a bold face goes, even in buying a cow, your honour; and I'm afraid the country's greatly bubbled in that ere partiklar; for if a man can't write down clearly what he means for to say, I does not thinks as how he knows what he means when he goes for to speak!"

This speech—quite a moral exposition from Peter, and doubtless inspired by his visit to market—for what wisdom cannot come from intercourse?—our good publican delivered with especial solemnity, giving a huge thump on the sides of his ass as he concluded.

"Upon my word, Peter," said Lester, laughing, "you have grown quite a Solomon; and, instead of a clerk, you ought to be a justice of the peace at the least; and, indeed, I must say that I think you shine more in the capacity of a lecturer than in that of a soldier."

"'Tis not for a clerk of the parish to have too great a knack at the weapons of the flesh," said Peter, sanctimoniously, and turning aside to conceal a slight confusion at the unlucky reminiscence of his warlike exploits; "but lauk, sir, even as to that, why, we has frightened all the robbers away. What would you have us do more?"

"Upon my word, Peter, you say right; and now good-day. Your wife's well, I hope? And Jacobina (is not that the cat's name?) in high health and favour?"

"Hem, hem! why, to be sure, the cat's a good cat; but she steals Goody Truman's cream as Goody sets for butter, reg'larly every night."

"Oh! you must cure her of that," said Lester, smiling. "I hope that's the worst fault."

"Why, your gardener do say," replied Peter, reluctantly, "as how she goes arter the pheasants in Copse-hole."

"The deuce!" cried the squire; "that will never do: she must be shot, Peter, she must be shot. *My* pheasants! *my* best preserves! and poor Goody Truman's cream, too! a perfect devil! Look to it, Peter; if I hear any complaints again, Jacobina is done for.—What are you laughing at, Nell?"

"Well, go thy ways, Peter, for a shrewd man and a clever man; it is not every one who could so suddenly have elicited my father's compassion for Goody Truman's cream."

"Pooh!" said the squire: "a pheasant's a serious thing, child; but you women don't understand matters."

They had now crossed through the village into the fields, and were slowly sauntering by

“Hedgerow elms on hillocks green,”

when, seated under a stunted pollard, they came suddenly on the ill-favoured person of Dame Darkmans. She sat bent (with her elbows on her knees, and her hands supporting her chin), looking up to the clear autumnal sky; and as they approached, she did not stir, or testify by sign or glance that she even perceived them.

There is a certain kind-hearted sociability of temper that you see sometimes among country gentlemen, especially not of the highest rank, who knowing, and looked up to by, every one immediately around them, acquire the habit of accosting all they meet—a habit as painful for them to break, as it was painful for poor Rousseau to be asked “how he did” by an apple-woman. And the kind old squire could not pass even Goody Darkmans (coming thus abruptly upon her) without a salutation.

“All alone, dame, enjoying the fine weather?—that’s right. And how fares it with you?”

The old woman turned round her dark and bleared eyes, but without moving limb or posture.

“’Tis wellnigh winter now; ’tis not easy for poor folks to fare well at this time o’ year. Where be we to get the firewood, and the clothing, and the dry bread, carse it! and the drop o’ stuff that’s to keep out the cold? Ah, it’s fine for you to ask how we does, and the days shortening, and the air sharpening.”

“Well, dame, shall I send to —— for a warm cloak for you?” said Madeline.

“Ho! thankye, young lady—thankye kindly, and I’ll wear it at your widding, for they says you be going to git married to the larned man yander. Wish ye well, ma’am; wish ye well.”

And the old hag grinned as she uttered this benediction, that sounded on her lips like the Lord’s Prayer on a witch’s; which converts the devotion to a crime, and the prayer to a curse.

“Ye’re very winsome, young lady,” she continued, eyeing Madeline’s tall and rounded figure from head to foot. “Yes, very; but I was as bonny as you once, and if you lives—mind that—fair and happy as you stand now, you’ll be as withered, and foul-faced, and wretched as me. Ha! ha! I loves to look on young folk and think o’ that. But mayhap ye won’t live to be old—more’s the pity! for ye might be a widow, and childless, and a lone ’oman, as I be, if you were to see sixty: an’ wouldn’t that be nice?—ha! ha!—much pleasure ye’d have in the fine weather then, and in people’s fine speeches, eh?”

“Come, dame,” said Lester, with a cloud on his benign brow, “this talk is ungrateful to me, and disrespectful to Miss Lester; it is not the way to——”

“Hout!” interrupted the old woman; “I begs pardon, sir, if I offended—I begs pardon, young lady: ’tis my way, poor old soul that I be. And you meant me kindly, and I would not be uncivil, now you are agoing to give me a bonny cloak; and what colour shall it be?”

“Why, what colour would you like best, dame—red?”

“Red! no! like a gypsy-quean, indeed! Besides, they all has red cloaks in the village, yonder. No, a handsome dark grey, or a gay, cheersome black, an’ then I’ll dance in mourning at your wedding, young lady; and that’s what ye’ll like. But what ha’ ye done with the merry bridegroom, ma’am? Gone away, I hear. Ah, ye’ll have a happy life on it, with a gentleman like him. I never seed him laugh once. Why does not he hire me as your sarvant; would not I be a favourite, thin? I’d stand on the thrishold, and give ye good-morrow every day. Oh! it does me a deal of good to say a blessing to them as be younger and gayer than me. Madge Darkman’s blessing! Och! what a thing to wish for!”

“Well, good-day, mother,” said Lester, moving on.

“Stay a bit, stay a bit, sir; has ye any commands, miss, yonder, at Master Aram’s? His old ’oman’s a gossip of mind; we were young together; and the lads did not know which to like the best. So we often meets and talks of the old times. I be going up there now. Och! I hope I shall be asked to the widding. And what a nice month to wid in! Novimber, Novimber, that’s the merry month for me! But ’tis cold—bitter cold too. Well, good-day, good-day. Ay,” continued the hag, as Lester and the sisters moved on, “ye all goes and throws niver a look behind. Ye despises the poor in your hearts. But the poor will have their day. Och! an’ I wish ye were dead, dead, dead,

an' I dancing in my bonny black cloak about your graves ; for an't all *mine* dead, cold, cold, rotting, and one kind and rich man might ha' saved them all ?”

Thus mumbling, the wretched creature looked after the father and his daughters, as they wound onward, till her dim eyes caught them no longer ; and then, drawing her rags round her, she rose, and struck into the opposite path, that led to Aram's house.

“I hope that hag will be no constant visitor at your future residence, Madeline,” said the younger sister ; “it would be like a blight on the air.”

“And if we could remove her from the parish,” said Lester, “it would be a happy day for the village. Yet strange as it may seem, so great is her power over them all, that there is never a marriage nor a christening in the village from which she is absent ; they dread her spite and foul tongue enough to make them even ask humbly for her presence.”

“And the hag seems to know that her bad qualities are a good policy, and obtain more respect than amiability would do,” said Ellinor. “I think there is some design in all she utters.”

“I don't know how it is, but the words and sight of that woman have struck a damp into my heart,” said Madeline, musingly.

“It would be wonderful if they had not, child,” said Lester, soothingly ; and he changed the conversation to other topics.

As, concluding their walk, they re-entered the village, they encountered that most welcome of all visit-

ants to a country village, the postman—a tall, thin pedestrian, famous for swiftness of foot, with a cheerful face, a swinging gait, and Lester's bag slung over his shoulder. Our little party quickened their pace—one letter—for Madeline—Aram's handwriting. Happy blush—bright smile! Ah! no meeting ever gives the delight that a letter can inspire in the short absences of a first love!

“And none for me!” said Lester, in a disappointed tone, and Ellinor's hand hung more heavily on his arm, and her step moved slower. “It is very strange in Walter; but I am really more angry than alarmed.”

“Be sure,” said Ellinor, after a pause, “that it is not his fault. Something may have happened to him. Good heavens! if he has been attacked again—those fearful highwaymen!”

“Nay,” said Lester, “the most probable supposition after all is, that he will not write until his expectations are realised or destroyed. Natural enough, too: it is what I should have done, if I had been in his place.”

“Natural!” said Ellinor, who now attacked where she before defended—“Natural not to give us *one* line to say he is well and safe! Natural! *I* could not have been so remiss!”

“Ay, child, you women are so fond of writing; 'tis not so with us, especially when we are moving about:—it is always, ‘Well, I must write to-morrow—well, I must write when this is settled—well, I must write when I arrive at such a place;’—and, meanwhile, time slips on, till perhaps we get ashamed of writing at all.

I heard a great man say once, that ‘Men must have something effeminate about them to be good correspondents ;’ and faith, I think it’s true enough on the whole.”

“I wonder if Madeline thinks so ?” said Ellinor, enviously glancing at her sister’s absorption, as, lingering a little behind, she devoured the contents of her letter.

“He is coming home immediately, dear father ; perhaps he may be here to-morrow,” cried Madeline, abruptly ; “think of that, Ellinor ! Ah ! and he writes in spirits !” and the poor girl clapped her hands delightedly, as the colour danced joyously over her cheek and neck.

“I am glad to hear it,” quoth Lester ; “we shall have him at last beat even Ellinor in gaiety !”

“That may easily be,” sighed Ellinor to herself, as she glided past them into the house, and sought her own chamber.

CHAPTER V.

A Reflection new and strange.—The Streets of London.—A great Man's Library.—A Conversation between the Student and an Acquaintance of the Reader's.—Its Result.

Here's a statesman !

Rolla. Ask for thyself.

Lat. What more can concern me than this ?

The Tragedy of Rolla.

It was an evening in the declining autumn of 1758 ; some public ceremony had occurred during the day, and the crowd which it had assembled was only now gradually lessening, as the shadows darkened along the streets. Through this crowd, self-absorbed as usual—with them, not one of them—Eugene Aram slowly wound his unaccompanied way. What an incalculable field of dread and sombre contemplation is opened to every man who, with his heart disengaged from himself, and his eyes accustomed to the sharp observance of his tribe, walks through the streets of a great city ! What a world of dark and troubled secrets in the breast of every one who hurries by you ! Goethe has said somewhere that each of us, the best as the worst, hides within him something—some feeling, some remem-

brance that, if known, would make you hate him. No doubt the saying is exaggerated ; but still, what a gloomy and profound sublimity in the idea !—what a new insight it gives into the hearts of the common herd—with what a strange interest it may inspire us for the humblest, the tritest passenger that shoulders us in the great thoroughfare of life ! One of the greatest pleasures in the world is to walk alone, and at night (while they are yet crowded), through the long lamp-lit streets of this huge metropolis : There, even more than in the silence of woods and fields, seems to me the source of endless, various meditation.

“*Crescit enim cum amplitudine rerum vis ingenii.*” *

There was that in Aram's person which irresistibly commanded attention. The earnest composure of his countenance, its thoughtful paleness, the long hair falling back, the peculiar and estranged air of his whole figure, accompanied as it was by a mildness of expression, and that lofty abstraction which characterises one who is a brooder over his own heart—a soothsayer to his own dreams ;—all these arrested from time to time the second gaze of the passenger, and forced on him the impression, simple as was the dress, and unpretending as was the gait of the stranger, that in indulging that second gaze he was in all probability satisfying the curiosity which makes us love to fix our regard upon any remarkable man.

* For the power of the intellect is increased by the amplitude of the things that feed it.

At length Aram turned from the more crowded streets, and in a short time paused before one of the most princely houses in London. It was surrounded by a spacious courtyard, and over the porch the arms of the owner, with the coronet and supporters, were raised in stone.

“Is Lord —— within?” asked Aram of the bluff porter who appeared at the gate.

“My lord is at dinner,” replied the porter, thinking the answer quite sufficient, and about to reclose the gate upon the unseasonable visitor.

“I am glad to find he is at home,” rejoined Aram, gliding past the servant with an air of quiet and unconscious command, and passing the courtyard to the main building.

At the door of the house, to which you ascended by a flight of stone steps, the valet of the nobleman—the only nobleman introduced in our tale, and consequently the same whom we have presented to our reader in the earlier part of this work—happened to be lounging and enjoying the smoke of the evening air. High-bred, prudent, and sagacious, Lord —— knew well how often great men, especially in public life, obtain odium for the rudeness of their domestics; and all those, especially about himself, had been consequently tutored into the habits of universal courtesy and deference, to the lowest stranger as well as to the highest guest. And trifling as this may seem, it was an act of morality as well as of prudence. Few can guess what pain may be saved to poor and proud men of merit by a similar precaution. The valet, therefore, replied to the visi-

tor's inquiry with great politeness ; he recollected Aram's name and repute ; and as the earl, taking delight in the company of men of letters, was generally easy of access to all such—the great man's great man instantly conducted the student to the earl's library, and informing him that his lordship had not yet left the dining-room, where he was entertaining a large party, assured him that he should be apprised of Aram's visit the moment he did so.

Lord —— was still in office ; sundry boxes were scattered on the floor ; papers, that seemed countless, lay strewed over the immense library table ; but here and there were books of a more seductive character than those of business, in which the mark lately set, and the pencilled note still fresh, showed the fondness with which men of cultivated minds, though engaged in official pursuits, will turn in the momentary intervals of more arid and toilsome life to those lighter studies, which perhaps they in reality the most enjoy.

One of these books, a volume of Shaftesbury, Aram carefully took up ; it opened of its own accord at that most beautiful and profound passage, which contains, perhaps, the justest sarcasm to which that ingenious and graceful reasoner has given vent :—

“The very spirit of Faction, for the greatest part, seems to be no other than the abuse of irregularity of that social love and common affection which is natural to mankind—for the opposite of sociableness is selfishness ; and of all characters, the thorough selfish one is the least forward in taking party. The men of this

sort are, in this respect, true men of moderation. They are secure of their temper, and possess themselves too well to be in danger of entering warmly into any cause, or engaging deeply with any side or faction."

On the margin of the page was the following note, in the handwriting of Lord —— :—

"Generosity hurries a man into party—philosophy keeps him aloof from it; the Emperor Julian says in his epistle to Themistius, 'If you should form only three or four philosophers, you would contribute more essentially to the happiness of mankind than many kings united.' Yet, if all men were philosophers, I doubt whether, though more men would be virtuous, there would be so many instances of an extraordinary virtue. The violent passions produce dazzling irregularities."

The student was still engaged with this note when the earl entered the room. As the door through which he passed was behind Aram, and he trod with a soft step, he was not perceived by the scholar till he had reached him, and, looking over Aram's shoulder, the earl said: "You will dispute the truth of my remark, will you not? Profound calm is the element in which you would place all the virtues."

"Not *all*, my lord," answered Aram, rising, as the earl now shook him by the hand, and expressed his delight at seeing the student again. Though the sagacious nobleman had no sooner heard the student's name than, in his own heart, he was convinced that

Aram had sought him for the purpose of soliciting a renewal of the offers he had formerly refused; he resolved to leave his visitor to open the subject himself, and appeared courteously to consider the visit as a matter of course, made without any other object than the renewal of the mutual pleasure of intercourse.

“I am afraid, my lord,” said Aram, “that you are engaged. My visit can be paid to-morrow if——”

“Indeed,” said the earl, interrupting him, and drawing a chair to the table, “I have no engagements which should deprive me of the pleasure of your company. A few friends have indeed dined with me, but as they are now with Lady ——, I do not think they will greatly miss me; besides, an occasional absence is readily forgiven in us happy men of office;—we, who have the honour of exciting the envy of all England, for being made magnificently wretched.”

“I am glad you allow so much, my lord,” said Aram, smiling; “*I* could not have said more. Ambition only makes a favourite to make an ingrate:—she has lavished her honours on Lord ——, and hear how he speaks of her bounty!”

“Nay,” said the earl, “I spoke wantonly, and stand corrected. I have no reason to complain of the course I have chosen. Ambition, like any other passion, gives us unhappy moments; but it gives us also an animated life. In its pursuit, the minor evils of the world are not felt; little crosses, little vexations, do not disturb us. Like men who walk in sleep, we are

absorbed in one powerful dream, and do not even know the obstacles in our way, or the dangers that surround us: in a word, we have *no private life*. All that is merely domestic, the anxiety and the loss which fret other men, which blight the happiness of other men, are not felt by us: we are wholly public; so that if we lose much comfort, we escape much care."

The earl broke off for a moment; and then, turning the subject, inquired after the Lesters, and, making some general and vague observations about that family, came purposely to a pause.

Aram broke it:—

"My lord," said he, with a slight, but not ungraceful embarrassment, "I fear that, in the course of your political life, you must have made one observation—that he who promises to-day will be called upon to perform to-morrow. No man who has anything to bestow can ever promise with impunity. Some time since, you tendered me offers that would have dazzled more ardent natures than mine; and which I might have advanced some claim to philosophy in refusing. I do not now come to ask a renewal of those offers. Public life and the haunts of men are as hateful as ever to my pursuits: but I come, frankly and candidly, to throw myself on that generosity which proffered to me then so large a bounty. Certain circumstances have taken from me the small pittance which supplied my wants;—I require only the power to pursue my quiet and obscure career of study—your

lordship can afford me that power: it is not against custom for the government to grant some small annuity to men of letters—your lordship's interest could obtain me this favour. Let me add, however, that I can offer nothing in return! Party politics—sectarian interests—are for ever dead to me: even my common studies are of small general utility to mankind. I am conscious of this—would it were otherwise! Once I hoped it would be—but——” Aram here turned deadly pale, gasped for breath, mastered his emotion, and proceeded—“I have no great claim, then, to this bounty, beyond that which all poor cultivators of the abstruse sciences can advance. It is well for a country that those sciences should be cultivated; they are not of a nature which is ever lucrative to the possessor—not of a nature that can often be left, like lighter literature, to the fair favour of the public;—they call, perhaps, more than any species of intellectual culture, for the protection of a government; and though in me would be a poor selection, the principle would still be served, and the example furnish precedent for nobler instances hereafter. I have said all, my lord.”

Nothing perhaps more affects a man of some sympathy with those who cultivate letters, than the pecuniary claims of one who can advance them with justice, and who advances them also with dignity. If the meanest, the most pitiable, the most heart-sickening object in the world, is the man of letters,

sunk into the habitual beggar, practising the tricks, incurring the rebuke, glorying in the shame, of the mingled mendicant and swindler ;—what, on the other hand, so touches, so subdues us, as the first and only petition of one whose intellect dignifies our whole kind ; and who prefers it with a certain haughtiness in his very modesty ; because, in asking a favour to himself, he may be only asking the power to enlighten the world ?

“ Say no more, sir,” said the earl, affected deeply, and gracefully giving way to the feeling ; “ the affair is settled. Consider it so. Name only the amount of the annuity you desire.”

With some hesitation Aram named a sum so moderate, so trivial, that the minister, accustomed as he was to the claims of younger sons and widowed dowagers—accustomed to the hungry cravings of petitioners without merit, who considered birth the only just title to the right of exactions from the public—was literally startled by the contrast. “ More than this,” added Aram, “ I do not require, and would decline to accept. We have some right to claim existence from the administrators of the common stock—none to claim affluence.”

“ Would to Heaven !” said the earl, smiling, “ that all claimants were like you ; pension-lists would not then call for indignation ; and ministers would not blush to support the justice of the favours they conferred. But are you still firm in rejecting a more

public career, with all its deserved emoluments and just honours? The offer I made you once I renew with increased avidity now."

"*'Despiciam dites,'*" answered Aram, "and, thanks to you, I may add, *'despiciamque famem.'*"*

* " 'Let me despise wealth,' and, thanks to you, I may add, 'and let me look down on famine.' "

CHAPTER VI.

The Thames at Night.—A Thought.—The Student reseeks the Ruffian.—A Human Feeling even in the Worst Soil.

Clem. 'Tis our last interview!

Stat. Pray Heaven it be!—*Clemanthes.*

ON leaving Lord ——'s, Aram proceeded, with a lighter and more rapid step, towards a less courtly quarter of the metropolis.

He had found, on arriving in London, that in order to secure the annual sum promised to Houseman, it had been necessary to strip himself even of the small stipend he had hoped to retain. And hence his visit, and hence his petition to Lord ——. He now bent his way to the spot in which Houseman had appointed their meeting. To the fastidious reader these details of pecuniary matters, so trivial in themselves, may be a little wearisome, and may seem a little undignified; but we are writing a romance of real life, and the reader must take what is homely with what may be more epic—the pettiness and the wants of the daily world, with its loftier sorrows and its grander crimes. Besides, who knows how darkly

just may be that moral which shows us a nature originally high, a soul once all a-thirst for truth, bowed (by what events?) to the manœuvres and the lies of the worldly hypocrite?

The night had now closed in, and its darkness was only relieved by the wan lamps that vistaed the streets, and a few dim stars that struggled through the reeking haze that curtained the great city. Aram had now gained one of the bridges "that arch the royal Thames," and, at no time dead to scenic attraction, he there paused for a moment and looked along the dark river that rushed below.

Oh, God! how many wild and stormy hearts have stilled themselves on that spot, for one dread instant of thought—of calculation—of resolve—one instant, the last of life! Look at night along the course of that stately river, how gloriously it seems to mock the passions of them that dwell beside it. Unchanged—unchanging—all around it quick death and troubled life; itself smiling up to the grey stars, and singing from its deep heart as it bounds along. Beside it is the senate, proud of its solemn triflers; and there the cloistered tomb, in which, as the loftiest honour, some handful of the fiercest of the strugglers may gain forgetfulness and a grave! There is no moral to a great city like the river that washes its walls.

There was something in the view before him that suggested reflections similar to these, to the strange and mysterious breast of the lingering student. A solemn dejection crept over him, a warning voice

sounded on his ear, the fearful genius within him was aroused, and even in the moment when his triumph seemed complete, and his safety secured, he felt it only as—

“The torrent’s smoothness ere it dash below.”

The mist obscured and saddened the few lights scattered on either side the water; and a deep and gloomy quiet brooded round:—

“The very houses seemed asleep,
And all that mighty heart was lying still.”

Arousing himself from his short and sombre reverie, Aram resumed his way, and threading some of the smaller streets on the opposite side of the water, arrived at last in the street in which he was to seek Houseman.

It was a narrow and dark lane, and seemed altogether of a suspicious and disreputable locality. One or two samples of the lowest description of alehouses broke the dark silence of the spot;—from them streamed the only lights which assisted the single lamp that burned at the entrance of the alley; and bursts of drunken laughter and obscene merriment broke out every now and then from these wretched theatres of *Pleasure*. As Aram passed one of them, a crowd of the lowest order of ruffian and harlot issued noisily from the door, and suddenly obstructed his way: through this vile press, reeking with the stamp and odour of the most repellant character of vice, was the lofty and cold student to force his path! The darkness, his quick step, his downcast head, favoured

his escape through the unhallowed throng, and he now stood opposite the door of a small and narrow house. A ponderous knocker adorned the door, which seemed of uncommon strength, being thickly studded with large nails. He knocked twice before his summons was answered, and then a voice from within cried, "Who's there? What want you?"

"I seek one called Houseman."

No answer was returned—some moments elapsed. Again the student knocked, and presently he heard the voice of Houseman himself call out—

"Who's there—Joe the cracksman?"

"Richard Houseman, it is I," answered Aram, in a deep tone, and suppressing the natural feelings of loathing and abhorrence.

Houseman uttered a quick exclamation, the door was hastily unbarred. All within was utterly dark; but Aram felt with a thrill of repugnance the gripe of his strange acquaintance on his hand.

"Ha! it is you!—Come in, come in!—let me lead you. Have a care—cling to the wall—the right hand—now then—stay. So—so"—(opening the door of the room, in which a single candle, wellnigh in its socket, broke on the previous darkness); "here we are! here we are! And how goes it—eh?"

Houseman now bustling about, did the honours of his apartment with a sort of complacent hospitality. He drew two rough wooden chairs, that in some late merriment seemed to have been upset, and lay, cumbering the unwashed and carpetless floor, in a position

exactly contrary to that destined them by their maker ; —he drew these chairs near a table strewed with drinking horns, half-emptied bottles, and a pack of cards. Dingy caricatures of the large coarse fashion of the day, decorated the walls ; and carelessly thrown on another table, lay a pair of huge horse-pistols, an immense shovel hat, a false mustache, a rouge-pot, and a riding-whip. All this the student comprehended with a rapid glance—his lip quivered for a moment—whether with shame or scorn of himself, and then throwing himself on the chair Houseman had set for him, he said—

“ I have come to discharge my part of our agreement.”

“ You are most welcome,” replied Houseman, with that tone of coarse, yet flippant jocularly, which afforded to the mien and manner of Aram a still stronger contrast than his more unrelieved brutality.

“ There,” said Aram, giving him a paper—“ there you will perceive that the sum mentioned is secured to you, the moment you quit this country. When shall that be ? Let me entreat haste.”

“ Your prayer shall be granted. Before daybreak to-morrow I will be on the road.”

Aram's face brightened.

“ There is my hand upon it,” said Houseman, earnestly. “ You may now rest assured that you are free of me for life. Go home—marry—enjoy your existence, as I have done. Within four days, if the wind set fair, I am in France.”

“My business is done; I will believe you,” said Aram frankly, and rising.

“You may,” answered Houseman. “Stay—I will light you to the door. Devil and death—how the d—d candle flickers!”

Across the gloomy passage, as the candle now flared—and now was dulled—by quick fits and starts—Houseman, after this brief conference, reconducted the student. And as Aram turned from the door, he flung his arms wildly aloft, and exclaimed, in the voice of one from whose heart a load is lifted—“Now, now for Madeline! I breathe freely at last!”

Meanwhile Houseman turned musingly back, and regained his room, muttering—

“Yes—yes—*my* business here is also done! Competence and safety abroad—after all, what a bugbear is this conscience!—fourteen years have rolled away—and lo! nothing discovered! nothing known! And easy circumstances—the very consequence of the deed—wait the remainder of my days: my child, too—my Jane—shall not want—shall not be a beggar nor a harlot.”

So musing, Houseman threw himself contentedly on the chair, and the last flicker of the expiring light, as it played upward on his rugged countenance, rested on one of those self-hugging smiles, with which a sanguine man contemplates a satisfactory future.

He had not been long alone before the door opened, and a woman with a light in her hand appeared. She was evidently intoxicated, and approached Houseman with a reeling and unsteady step.

“How now, Bess? drunk as usual! Get to bed, you she shark, go!”

“Tush, man, tush! don’t talk to your betters,” said the woman, sinking into a chair; and her situation, disgusting as it was, could not conceal the striking, though somewhat coarse beauty of her face and person.

Even Houseman (his heart being opened, as it were, by the cheering prospects of which his soliloquy had indulged the contemplation) was sensible of the effect of the mere physical attraction, and, drawing his chair closer to her, he said in a tone less harsh than usual—

“Come, Bess, come, you must correct that d—d habit of yours; perhaps I may make a lady of you after all. What if I were to let you take a trip with me to France, old girl, eh; and let you set off that handsome face—for you are devilish handsome, and that’s the truth of it—with some of the French gew-gaws you women love? What if I were? would you be a good girl, eh?”

“I think I would, Dick—I think I would,” replied the woman, showing a set of teeth as white as ivory, with pleasure partly at the flattery, partly at the proposition: “you are a good fellow, Dick, that you are.”

“Humph!” said Houseman, whose hard, shrewd mind was not easily cajoled; “but what’s that paper in your bosom, Bess? A love-letter, I’ll swear.”

“’Tis to you, then; came to you this morning, only somehow or other I forgot to give it you till now!”

“Ha! a letter to me!” said Houseman, seizing the epistle in question. “Hem! the Knaresbro’ postmark—my mother-in-law’s crabbed hand, too! what can the old crone want?”

He opened the letter, and hastily scanning its contents, started up.

“Mercy, mercy!” cried he, “my child is ill—dying. I may never see her again—my only child—the only thing that loves me—that does not loathe me as a villain!”

“Heydey, Dicky!” said the woman, clinging to him, “don’t take on so; who so fond of you as me?—what’s a brat like that?”

“Curse on you, hag!” exclaimed Houseman, dashing her to the ground with a rude brutality: “*you* love me! Pah! My child—my little Jane—my pretty Jane—my merry Jane—my innocent Jane—I will seek her instantly—instantly! What’s money? what’s ease—if—if——”

And the father, wretch, ruffian as he was, stung to the core of that last redeeming feeling of his dissolute nature, struck his breast with his clenched hand, and rushed from the room—from the house.

CHAPTER VII.

Madeline, her hopes.—A mild Autumn characterised.—A Landscape.—A Return.

'Tis late and cold—stir up the fire,
Sit close, and draw the table nigher;
Be merry, and drink wine that's old,
A hearty medicine 'gainst a cold:
Welcome—welcome shall fly round!

BEAUMONT AND FLETCHER: *Song in the Lover's Progress.*

As when the great poet,

“ Escaped the Stygian pool, though long detained
In that obscure sojourn ; while, in his flight,
Through utter and through middle darkness borne,
He sang of chaos and eternal night : ”—

as when, revisiting the “ holy light, offspring of heaven first-born,” the sense of freshness and glory breaks upon him, and kindles into the solemn joyfulness of adjuring song ; so rises the mind from the contemplation of the gloom and guilt of life, “ the utter and the middle darkness,” to some pure and bright redemption of our nature—some creature of “ the starry threshold,” “ the regions mild of calm and serene air.” Never was a nature more beautiful and soft than that of Madeline Lester—never a nature more inclined to live “ above the smoke and stir of this dim spot, which men call earth ”—to com-

mune with its own high and chaste creations of thought—to make a world out of the emotions which *this* world knows not—a paradise, which sin, and suspicion, and fear, had never yet invaded—where God might recognise no evil, and angels forebode no change.

Aram's return was now daily, nay, even hourly, expected. Nothing disturbed the soft, though thoughtful serenity, with which his betrothed relied upon the future. Aram's letters had been more deeply impressed with the evidence of love, than even his spoken vows; those letters had diffused not so much an agitated joy, as a full and mellow light of happiness over her heart. Everything, even nature, seemed inclined to smile with approbation on her hopes. The autumn had never, in the memory of man, worn so lovely a garment; the balmy and freshening warmth which sometimes characterises that period of the year was not broken, as yet, by the chilling winds, or the sullen mists, which speak to us so mournfully of the change that is creeping over the beautiful world. The summer visitants among the feathered tribe yet lingered in flocks, showing no intention of departure; and their song—but above all, the song of the skylark—which, to the old English poet, was what the nightingale is to the Eastern—seemed even to grow more cheerful as the sun shortened his daily task; the very mulberry-tree, and the rich boughs of the horse-chestnut, retained something of their verdure; and the thousand glories of the woodland around Grassdale were still checkered with the golden hues that herald, but beautify, decay. Still

no news had been received of Walter : and this was the only source of anxiety that troubled the domestic happiness of the Manor House. But the squire continued to remember that in youth he himself had been but a negligent correspondent ; and the anxiety he felt had lately assumed rather the character of anger at Walter's forgetfulness, than of fear for his safety. There were moments when Ellinor silently mourned and pined ; but she loved her sister not less even than her cousin ; and in the prospect of Madeline's happiness did not too often question the future respecting her own.

One evening the sisters were sitting at their work by the window of the little parlour, and talking over various matters : of which the Great World, strange as it may seem, never made a part.

They conversed in a low tone ; for Lester sat by the hearth, in which a wood fire had been just kindled, and appeared to have fallen into an afternoon slumber. The sun was sinking to repose, and the whole landscape lay before them bathed in light, till a cloud passing overhead darkened the heavens just immediately above them, and one of those beautiful sun-showers, that rather characterise the spring than autumn, began to fall ; the rain was rather sharp, and descended with a pleasant and freshening noise through the boughs, all shining in the sunlight : it did not, however, last long, and presently there sprang up the glorious rainbow, and the voices of the birds, which a minute before were mute, burst into a general

chorus,—the last hymn of the declining day. The sparkling drops fell fast and gratefully from the trees, and over the whole scene there breathed an inexpressible sense of gladness,—

“The odour and the harmony of eve.”

“How beautiful!” said Ellinor, pausing from her work. “Ah, see the squirrel—is that our pet one?—he is coming close to the window, poor fellow! Stay, I will get him some bread.”

“Hush!” said Madeline, half rising, and turning quite pale; “do you hear a step without?”

“Only the dripping of the boughs,” answered Ellinor.

“No, no—it is he!—it is he!” cried Madeline, the blood rushing back vividly to her cheeks. “I know his step!”

And—yes—winding round the house till he stood opposite the window, the sisters now beheld Eugene Aram: the diamond rain glittered on the locks of his long hair; his cheeks were flushed by exercise, or more probably the joy of return; a smile, in which there was no shade or sadness, played over his features, which caught also a fictitious semblance of gladness from the rays of the setting sun, which fell full upon them.

“My Madeline! my love! my Madeline!” broke from his lips.

“You are returned—thank God—thank God—safe—well?”

“And happy!” added Aram, with a deep meaning in the tone of his voice.

“Heyday, heyday!” cried the squire, starting up, “what’s this? Bless me, Eugene!—wet through, too, seemingly! Nell, run and open the door—more wood on the fire—the pheasants for supper—and stay, girl, stay—there’s the key of the cellar—the twenty-one port—you know it. Ah! ah! God willing, Eugene Aram shall not complain of his welcome back to Grassdale!”

CHAPTER VIII.

Affection: its God-like nature.—The conversation between Aram and Madeline.—The Fatalist forgets Fate.

Hope is a lover's staff; walk hence with that,
And manage it against despairing thoughts.

Two Gentlemen of Verona.

IF there be anything thoroughly lovely in the human heart, it is affection! All that makes hope elevated, or fear generous, belongs to the capacity of loving. For my own part, I do not wonder, in looking over the thousand creeds and sects of men, that so many religionists have traced their theology—that so many moralists have wrought their system—from love. The errors thus originated have something in them that charms us, even while we smile at the theology, or while we neglect the system. What a beautiful fabric would be human nature—what a divine guide would be human reason—if love were indeed the stratum of the one, and the inspiration of the other! We are told of a picture by a great painter of old, in which an infant is represented sucking a mother wounded to the death, who, even in that agony, strives to prevent the child from injuring itself by imbibing the blood

mingled with the milk.* How many emotions, that might have made us permanently wiser and better, have we lost in losing that picture !

Certainly love assumes a more touching and earnest semblance, when we find it in some retired and sequestered hollow of the world ; when it is not mixed up with the daily frivolities and petty emotions of which a life passed in cities is so necessarily composed : we cannot but believe it a deeper and a more absorbing passion ; perhaps we are not always right in the belief.

Had one of that order of angels to whom a knowledge of the future, or the seraphic penetration into the hidden heart of man is forbidden, stayed his wings over the lovely valley in which the main scene of our history has been cast, no spectacle might have seemed to him more appropriate than that pastoral spot, or more elevated in the character of its tenderness above the fierce and short-lived passions of the ordinary world, than the love that existed between Madeline and her betrothed. Their natures seemed so suited to each other ! the solemn and *undiurnal* mood of the one was reflected back in hues so gentle, and yet so faithful, from the purer, but scarce less thoughtful, character of the other ! Their sympathies ran through the same channel, and mingled in a common fount ; and whatever was dark and troubled in the breast of Aram, was now suffered not to appear. Since his return, his mood was brighter and more tranquil ; and

* “Intelligitur sentire mater et timere, ne è mortuo lacte sanguinem lambat.”

he seemed better fitted to appreciate and respond to the peculiar tenderness of Madeline's affection. There are some stars which, viewed by the naked eye, seem one, but in reality are two separate orbs revolving round each other, and drinking, each from each, a separate yet united existence:—such stars seemed a type of them.

Had anything been wanting to complete Madeline's happiness, the change in Aram supplied the want. The sudden starts, the abrupt changes of mood and countenance, that had formerly characterised him, were now scarcely, if ever, visible. He seemed to have resigned himself with confidence to the prospects of the future, and to have forsworn the haggard recollections of the past: he moved, and looked, and smiled like other men; he was alive to the little circumstances around him, and no longer absorbed in the contemplation of a separate and strange existence within himself. Some scattered fragments of his poetry bear the date of this time: they are chiefly addressed to Madeline; and, amidst the vows of love, a spirit, sometimes of a wild and bursting, sometimes of a profound and collected happiness, are visible. There is great beauty in many of these fragments, and they bear a stronger evidence of *heart*—they breathe more of nature and truth, than the poetry that belongs of right to that time.

And thus day rolled on day, till it was now the eve before their bridals. Aram had deemed it prudent to tell Lester that he had sold his annuity, and that he had applied to the earl for the pension which we have seen he had been promised. As to his supposed rela-

tion—the illness he had created he suffered now to cease ; and indeed the approaching ceremony gave him a graceful excuse for turning the conversation away from any topics that did not relate to Madeline or to that event.

It was the eve before their marriage : Aram and Madeline were walking along the valley that led to the house of the former.

“How fortunate it is,” said Madeline, “that our future residence will be so near my father’s. I cannot tell you with what delight he looks forward to the pleasant circle we shall make. Indeed, I think he would scarcely have consented to our wedding, if it had separated us from him.”

Aram stopped, and plucked a flower.

“Ah ! indeed, indeed, Madeline ! Yet in the course of the various changes of life, how more than probable it is that we shall be divided from him—that we shall leave this spot.”

“It is possible, certainly ; but not probable : is it, Eugene ?”

“Would it grieve thee, irremediably, dearest, were it so ?” rejoined Aram, evasively.

“Irremediably ! What could grieve me irremediably that did not happen to you ?”

“Should, then, circumstances occur to induce us to leave this part of the country, for one yet more remote, you could submit cheerfully to the change ?”

“I should weep for my father—I should weep for Ellinor ; but——”

“But what ?”

"I should comfort myself in thinking that you would then be yet more to me than ever!"

"Dearest!"

"But why did you speak thus; only to try me? Ah! that is needless."

"No, my Madeline; I have no doubt of your affection. When you loved such as me, I knew at once how blind, how devoted must be that love. You were not won through the usual avenues to a woman's heart; neither wit nor gaiety, nor youth nor beauty, did you behold in me. Whatever attracted you towards me, that which must have been sufficiently powerful to make you overlook these ordinary allurements, will be also sufficiently enduring to resist all ordinary changes. But listen, Madeline. Do not yet ask me wherefore; but I fear that a certain fatality will constrain us to leave this spot very shortly after our wedding."

"How disappointed my poor father will be!" said Madeline, sighing.

"Do not, on any account, mention this conversation to him, or to Ellinor: 'sufficient for the day is the evil thereof.'"

Madeline wondered, but said no more. There was a pause for some minutes.

"Do you remember," observed Madeline, "that it was about here we met that strange man whom you had formerly known?"

"Ha! was it?—Here, was it?"

"What has become of him?"

“He is abroad, I hope,” said Aram, calmly. “Yes, let me think; by this time he *must* be in France. Dearest, let us rest here on this dry mossy bank for a little while;” and Aram drew his arm round her waist, and, his countenance brightening as if with some thought of increasing joy, he poured out anew those protestations of love, and those anticipations of the future, which befitted the eve of a morrow so full of auspicious promise.

The heaven of their fate seemed calm and glowing; and Aram did not dream that the one small cloud of fear which was set within it, and which he alone beheld afar, and unprophetic of the storm, was charged with the thunderbolt of a doom he had protracted, not escaped.

CHAPTER IX.

Walter and the Corporal on the Road.—The Evening sets in.—The Gypsy tents.—Adventure with the Horseman.—The Corporal discomfited, and the arrival at Knaresborough.

Long had he wandered, when from far he sees
A ruddy flame that gleamed betwixt the trees,
Sir Gawaine prays him tell
Where lies the road to princely Carduel.

The Knight of the Sword.

“WELL, Bunting, we are not far from our night’s resting-place,” said Walter, pointing to a milestone on the road.

“The poor beast will be glad when we gets there, your honour,” answered the corporal, wiping his brows.

“Which beast, Bunting?”

“Augh!—now your honour’s severe! I am glad to see you so merry.”

Walter sighed heavily; there was no mirth at his heart at that moment.

“Pray, sir,” said the corporal, after a pause, “if not too bold, has your honour heard how they be doing at Grassdale?”

“No, Bunting, I have not held any correspondence with my uncle since our departure. Once I wrote to

him on setting off to Yorkshire, but I could give him no direction to write to me again. The fact is, that I have been so sanguine in this search, and from day to day I have been so led on in tracing a clue, which I fear is now broken, that I have constantly put off writing till I could communicate that certain intelligence which I flattered myself I should be able ere this to procure. However, if we are unsuccessful at Knaresborough, I shall write from that place a detailed account of our proceedings."

"And I hopes you will say as how I have given your honour satisfaction."

"Depend upon that."

"Thank you, sir, thank you humbly ; I would not like the squire to think I'm ungrateful !—augh—and mayhap, I may have more cause to be grateful by-and-by, whenever the squire, God bless him ! in consideration of your honour's good offices, should let me have the bit cottage rent free."

"A man of the world, Bunting ; a man of the world !"

"Your honour's mighty obleeving," said the corporal, putting his hand to his hat ; "I wonders," renewed he, after a short pause—"I wonders how poor neighbour Dealtry is. He was a sufferer last year ; I should like to know how Peter be getting on—'tis a good creature."

Somewhat surprised at this sudden sympathy on the part of the corporal, for it was seldom that Bunting expressed kindness for any one, Walter replied—

"When I write, Bunting, I will not fail to inquire

how Peter Dealtry is ;—does your kind heart suggest any other message to him ?”

“ Only to ask arter Jacobina, poor thing : she might get herself into trouble if little Peter fell sick and neglected her like—augh ! And I hopes as how Peter airs the bit cottage now and then ; but the squire, God bless him ! will see to that and the tato-garden, I’m sure.”

“ You may rely on that, Bunting,” said Walter, sinking into a reverie, from which he was shortly roused by the corporal.

“ I s’pose Miss Madeline be married afore now, your honour ? Well, pray Heaven she be happy with that ere larned man !”

Walter’s heart beat faster for a moment at this sudden remark, but he was pleased to find that the time when the thought of Madeline’s marriage was accompanied with painful emotion was entirely gone by ; the reflection, however, induced a new train of idea, and without replying to the corporal, he sank into a deeper meditation than before.

The shrewd Bunting saw that it was not a favourable moment for renewing the conversation : he therefore suffered his horse to fall back, and taking a quid from his tobacco-box, was soon as well entertained as his master. In this manner they rode on for about a couple of miles, the evening growing darker as they proceeded, when a green opening in the road brought them within view of a gypsy’s encampment ; the scene was so sudden and picturesque, that it aroused the

young traveller from his reverie, and as his tired horse walked slowly on, the bridle about its neck, he looked with an earnest eye on the vagrant settlement beside his path. The moon had just risen above a dark copse in the rear, and cast a broad, deep shadow along the green, without lessening the vivid effect of the fires which glowed and sparkled in the darker recess of the waste land, as the gloomy forms of the Egyptians were seen dimly cowering round the blaze. A scene of this sort is perhaps one of the most striking, that the green lanes of old England afford ; to me it has always an irresistible attraction, partly from its own claims, partly from those of association. When I was a mere boy, and bent on a solitary excursion over parts of England and Scotland, I saw something of that wild people—though not perhaps so much as the ingenious George Hanger, to whose memoirs the reader may be referred for some rather amusing pages on gypsy life. As Walter was still eyeing the encampment, he in return had not escaped the glance of an old crone, who came running hastily up to him, and begged permission to tell his fortune and to have her hand crossed with silver.

Very few men under thirty ever sincerely refuse an offer of this sort. Nobody believes in these predictions, yet every one likes hearing them : and Walter, after faintly refusing the proposal twice, consented the third time ; and, drawing up his horse, submitted his hand to the old lady. In the meanwhile one of the younger urchins who had accompanied her had run to the en-

campments for a light, and now stood behind the old woman's shoulder, rearing on high a pine brand, which cast over the little group a red and weird-like glow.

The reader must not imagine we are now about to call his credulity in aid to eke out any interest he may feel in our story; the old crone was but a vulgar gypsy, and she predicted to Walter the same fortune she always predicted to those who paid a shilling for the prophecy—an heiress with blue eyes—seven children—troubles about the epoch of forty-three, happily soon over—and a healthy old age, with an easy death. Though Walter was not impressed with any reverential awe for these vaticinations, he yet could not refrain from inquiring whether the journey on which he was at present bent was likely to prove successful in its object.

“’Tis an ill night,” said the old woman, lifting up her wild face and elfin locks with a mysterious air—
“’tis an ill night for them as seeks, and for them as asks—*He’s* about——”

“He—who?”

“No matter!—you may be successful, young sir, yet wish you had not been so. The moon thus, and the wind there, promise that you will get your desires, and find them crosses.”

The corporal had listened very attentively to these predictions, and was now about to thrust forth his own hand to the soothsayer, when from a cross-road to the right came the sound of hoofs, and presently a horseman at full trot pulled up beside them.

“Harkye, old she-devil, or you, sirs—is this the road to Knaresborough?”

The gypsy drew back, and gazed on the countenance of the rider, on which the red glare of the pine-brand shone full.

“To Knaresborough, Richard the dare-devil? Ay, and what does the ramping bird want in the old nest? Welcome back to Yorkshire, Richard, my ben-cove!”

“Ha!” said the rider, shading his eyes with his hand as he returned the gaze of the gypsy—“is it you, Bess Airlie?—your welcome is like the owl’s, and reads the wrong way. But I must not stop. This takes to Knaresborough, then?”

“Straight as a dying man’s curse to hell,” replied the crone, in that metaphorical style in which all her tribe love to speak, and of which their proper language is indeed almost wholly composed.

The horseman answered not, but spurred on.

“Who is that?” asked Walter, earnestly, as the old woman stretched her tawny neck after the rider.

“An old friend, sir,” replied the Egyptian, dryly. “I have not seen him these fourteen years; but it is not Bess Airlie who is apt to forgit friend or foe. Well, sir, shall I tell your honour’s good-luck?” (here she turned to the corporal, who sat erect on his saddle, with his hand on his holster)—“the colour of the lady’s hair—and——”

“Hold your tongue, you limb of Satan!” interrupted the corporal, fiercely, as if his whole tide of thought, so lately favourable to the soothsayer, had

undergone a deadly reversion. "Please your honour, it's getting late, we had better be jogging!"

"You are right," said Walter, spurring his jaded horse; and nodding his adieu to the gypsy, he was soon out of sight of the encampment.

"Sir," said the corporal, joining his master, "that is a man as I have seed afore; I knowed his ugly face again in a crack—'tis the man what came to Grassdale arter Mr Aram, and we saw arterwards the night we chanced on Sir Peter Thingumebob."

"Bunting," said Walter, in a low voice, "I too have been trying to recall the face of that man, and I too am persuaded I have seen it before. A fearful suspicion, amounting almost to conviction, creeps over me, that the hour in which I last saw it was one when my life was in peril. In a word, I do believe that I beheld that face bending over me on the night when I lay under the hedge, and so nearly escaped murder! If I am right, it was, however, the mildest of the ruffians—the one who counselled his comrades against despatching me."

The corporal shuddered.

"Pray, sir," said he, after a moment's pause, "do see if your pistols are primed:—so—so. 'Tis not out o' nature that the man may have some 'complices hereabout, and may think to waylay us. The old gypsy, too, what a face she had! Depend on it, they are two of a trade—ough!—bother—whaugh!"

And the corporal grunted his most significant grunt.

"It is not at all unlikely, Bunting; and as we are

not now far from Knaresborough, it will be prudent to ride on as fast as our horses will allow us. Keep up alongside."

"Certainly—I'll protect your honour," said the corporal, getting on that side where, the hedge being the thinnest, an ambush was less likely to be laid. "I care more for your honour's safety than my own, or what a brute I should be—augh!"

The master and man trotted on for some little distance, when they perceived a dark object moving along by the grass on the side of the road. The corporal's hair bristled—he uttered an oath, which he mistook for a prayer. Walter felt his breath grow a little thick as he watched the motions of the object so imperfectly beheld; presently, however, it grew into a man on horseback, trotting very slowly along the grass; and as they now neared him, they recognised the rider they had just seen, whom they might have imagined, from the pace at which he left them before, to have been considerably ahead of them.

The horseman turned round as he saw them.

"Pray, gentlemen," said he, in a tone of great and evident anxiety, "how far is it to Knaresborough?"

"Don't answer him, your honour," whispered the corporal.

"Probably," replied Walter, unheeding this advice, "you know this road better than we do. It cannot, however, be above three or four miles hence."

"Thank you, sir—it is long since I have been in these parts. I used to know the country, but they

have made new roads and strange enclosures, and I now scarcely recognise anything familiar. Curse on this brute! curse on it, I say!" repeated the horseman through his ground teeth, in a tone of angry vehemence: "I never wanted to ride so quick before, and the beast has fallen as lame as a tree. This comes of trying to go faster than other folks.—Sir, are you a father?"

This abrupt question, which was uttered in a sharp, strained voice, a little startled Walter. He replied shortly in the negative, and was about to spur onward, when the horseman continued—and there was something in his voice and manner that compelled attention—

"And I am in doubt whether I have a child or not.—By G—! it is a bitter, gnawing state of mind.—I may reach Knaresborough to find my only daughter dead, sir!—dead!"

Despite Walter's suspicions of the speaker, he could not but feel a thrill of sympathy at the visible distress with which these words were said.

"I hope not," said he, involuntarily.

"Thank you, sir," replied the horseman, trying ineffectually to spur on his steed, which almost came down at the effort to proceed. "I have ridden thirty miles across the country at full speed, for they had no post-horses at the d—d place where I hired this brute. This was the only creature I could get for love or money; and now the devil only knows how important every moment may be. While I speak, my child

may breathe her last!" And the man brought his clenched fist on the shoulder of his horse in mingled spite and rage.

"All sham, your honour," whispered the corporal.

"Sir," cried the horseman, now raising his voice, "I need not have asked if you had been a father—if you had, you would have had compassion on me ere this—you would have lent me your own horse."

"The impudent rogue!" muttered the corporal.

"Sir," replied Walter, "it is not to the tale of every stranger that a man gives belief."

"Belief!—ah, well, well, 'tis no matter," said the horseman, sullenly. "There was a time, man, when I would have forced what I now solicit; but my heart's gone. Ride on, sir—ride on—and the curse of——"

"If," interrupted Walter, irresolutely, "if I could believe your statement:—but no. Mark me, sir; I have reasons—fearful reasons, for imagining you mean this but as a snare!"

"Ha!" said the horseman, deliberately, "have we met before?"

"I believe so."

"And you have had cause to complain of me? It may be—it may be: but were the grave before me, and if one lie would smite me into it, I solemnly swear that I now utter but the naked truth."

"It would be folly to trust him, Bunting?" said Walter, turning round to his attendant.

"Folly!—sheer madness—bother!"

"If you are the man I take you for," said Walter,

“you once raised your voice against the murder, though you assisted in the robbery, of a traveller:—that traveller was myself. I will remember the mercy—I will forget the outrage; and I will not believe that you have devised this tale as a snare. Take my horse, sir: I will trust you.”

Houseman, for it was he, flung himself instantly from his saddle. “I don’t ask God to bless you: a blessing in my mouth would be worse than a curse. But you will not repent this: you will not repent it!”

Houseman said these few words with a palpable emotion; and it was more striking on account of the evident coarseness and hardened brutality of his nature. In a moment more he had mounted Walter’s horse, and, turning ere he sped on, inquired at what place at Knaresborough the horse should be sent. Walter directed him to the principal inn; and Houseman, waving his hand, and striking his spurs into the animal, wearied as it was, shot out of sight in a moment.

“Well, if ever I seed the like!” quoth the corporal. “Lira, lira, la, la, la! lira, lara, la, la, la!—augh!—waugh!—bother!”

“So my good-nature does not please you, Bunting!”

“Oh, sir, it does not sinnify: we shall have our throats cut—that’s all.”

“What! you don’t believe the story?”

“I? Bless your honour, *I* am no fool!”

“Bunting!”

“ Sir.”

“ You forget yourself.”

“ Augh !”

“ So you don't think I should have lent the horse !”

“ Sartainly not.”

“ On occasions like these, every man ought to take care of himself? Prudence before generosity ?”

“ Of a sartainty, sir !”

“ Dismount, then—I want my horse. You may shift with the lame one.”

“ Augh, sir—baugh !”

“ Rascal, dismount, I say !” said Walter, angrily, for the corporal was one of those men who aim at governing their masters : and his selfishness now irritated Walter as much as his impertinent tone of superior wisdom.

The corporal hesitated. He thought an ambushade by the road of certain occurrence ; and he was weighing the danger of riding a lame horse against his master's displeasure. Walter, perceiving he demurred, was seized with so violent a resentment that he dashed up to the corporal, and, grasping him by the collar, swung him, heavy as he was—being wholly unprepared for such force—to the ground.

Without deigning to look at his condition, Walter mounted the sound horse, and, throwing the bridle of the lame one over a bough, left the corporal to follow at his leisure.

There is not, perhaps, a more sore state of mind than that which we experience when we have com-

mitted an act we meant to be generous, and fear to be foolish.

“Certainly,” said Walter, soliloquising, “certainly the man is a rascal; yet he was evidently sincere in his emotion. Certainly he was one of the men who robbed me; yet, if so, he was also the one who interceded for my life. If I should now have given strength to a villain;—if I should have assisted him to an outrage against myself! What more probable? Yet, on the other hand, if his story be true;—if his child be dying—and if, through my means, he obtain a last interview with her! Well, well, let me hope so!”

Here he was joined by the corporal, who, angry as he was, judged it prudent to smother his rage for another opportunity; and, by favouring his master with his company, to procure himself an ally immediately at hand, should his suspicions prove true. But for once his knowledge of the world deceived him: no sign of living creature broke the loneliness of the way. By-and-by the lights of the town gleamed upon them; and, on reaching the inn, Walter found his horse had been already sent there, and, covered with dust and foam, was submitting itself to the tutelary hands of the ostler.

CHAPTER X.

Walter's Reflections.—Mine Host.—A Gentle Character and a Green Old Age.—The Garden, and that which it teacheth.—A Dialogue wherein new hints towards the wished-for discovery are suggested.—The Curate.—A Visit to a Spot of Deep Interest to the Adventurer.

I made a posy while the day ran by;
Here will I smell my remnant out, and tie
My life within this band.—GEORGE HERBERT.

The time approaches,
That will with due precision make us know
What———.—*Macbeth*.

THE next morning Walter rose early, and descending into the courtyard of the inn, he there met with the landlord, who—a hoe in his hand—was just about to enter a little gate that led into the garden. He held the gate open for Walter.

“It is a fine morning, sir; would you like to look into the garden?” said mine host, with an inviting smile.

Walter accepted the offer, and found himself in a large and well-stocked garden, laid out with much neatness and some taste: the landlord halted by a parterre which required his attention, and Walter walked on in solitary reflection.

The morning was serene and clear, but the frost mingled the freshness with an "eager and nipping air;" and Walter unconsciously quickened his step as he paced to and fro the straight walk that bisected the garden, with his eyes on the ground, and his hat over his brows.

Now then he had reached the place where the last trace of his father seemed to have vanished, in how wayward and strange a manner! If no further clue could be here discovered by the inquiry he purposed, at this spot would terminate his researches and his hopes. But the young heart of the traveller was buoyed up with expectation. Looking back to the events of the last few weeks, he thought he recognised the finger of Destiny guiding him from step to step, and now resting on the scene to which it had brought his feet. How singularly complete had been the train of circumstance, which, linking things seemingly most trifling, most dissimilar, had lengthened into one continuous chain of evidence! the trivial incident that led him to the saddler's shop; the accident that brought the whip that had been his father's to his eye; the account from Courtland, which had conducted him to this remote part of the country; and now the narrative of Elmore leading him to the spot, at which all inquiry seemed as yet to pause! Had he been led hither only to hear repeated that strange tale of sudden and wanton disappearance—to find an abrupt wall, a blank and impenetrable barrier to a course hitherto so continuously guided on? Had he been the sport of Fate, and not its

instrument? No; he was filled with a serious and profound conviction, that a discovery which he of all men was best entitled by the unalienable claims of blood and birth to achieve was reserved for him, and that this grand dream of childhood was now about to be embodied and attained. He could not but be sensible, too, that as he had proceeded on his high enterprise, his character had acquired a weight and a thoughtful seriousness, which was more fitted to the nature of that enterprise than akin to his earlier temper. This consciousness swelled his bosom with a profound and steady hope. When Fate selects her human agents, her dark and mysterious spirit is at work within them; she moulds their hearts, she exalts their energies, she shapes them to the part she has allotted them, and renders the mortal instrument worthy of the solemn end.

Thus chewing the cud of his involved and deep reflections, the young adventurer paused at last opposite his host, who was still bending over his pleasant task, and every now and then, excited by the exercise and the fresh morning air, breaking into snatches of some old rustic song. The contrast in mood between himself and this

“Unvexed loiterer by the world’s green ways,”

struck forcibly upon him. Mine host, too, was one whose appearance was better suited to his occupation than his profession. He might have told some three-and-sixty years, but it was a comely and green old age; his cheek was firm and ruddy, not with nightly cups, but the fresh witness of the morning breezes it was

wont to court ; his frame was robust, not corpulent ; and his long grey hair, which fell almost to his shoulders, his clear blue eyes, and a pleasant curve in a mouth characterised by habitual good-humour, completed a portrait that even many a dull observer would have paused to gaze upon. And, indeed, the good man enjoyed a certain kind of reputation for his comely looks and cheerful manner. His picture had even been taken by a young artist in the neighbourhood : nay, the likeness had been multiplied into engravings, somewhat rude and somewhat unfaithful, which might be seen occupying no unobtrusive nor dusty corner in the principal printshop of the town : nor was mine host's character a contradiction to his looks. He had seen enough of life to be intelligent, and had judged it rightly enough to be kind. He had passed that line so nicely given to man's codes in those admirable pages which first added delicacy of tact to the strong sense of English composition. "We have just religion enough," it is said somewhere in the *Spectator*, "to make us hate, but not enough to make us love, one another." Our good landlord, peace be with his ashes ! had never halted at this limit. The country innkeeper might have furnished Goldsmith with a counterpart to his country curate ; his house was equally hospitable to the poor—his heart equally tender, in a nature wiser than experience, to error, and equally open, in its warm simplicity, to distress. Peace be with thee, —— ! Our grandsire was thy patron—yet a patron thou didst not want. Merit in thy capacity is seldom bare of reward.

The public want no indicators to a house like thine. And who requires a third person to tell him how to appreciate the value of good-nature and good cheer?

As Walter stood and contemplated the old man bending over the sweet fresh earth, and then, glancing round, saw the quiet garden stretching away on either side, with its boundaries lost among the thick evergreen, something of that grateful and moralising stillness with which some country scenegenerally inspires us, when we awake to its consciousness from the troubled dream of dark and unquiet thought, stole over his mind; and certain old lines which his uncle, who loved the soft and rustic morality that pervades the ancient race of English minstrels, had taught him, when a boy, came pleasantly into his recollection:—

“With all, as in some rare limned book, we see
Here painted lectures of God’s sacred will.
The daisy teacheth lowliness of mind;
The camomile, we should be patient still;
The rue, our hate of vice’s poison ill;
The woodbine, that we should our friendship hold
Our hope the savoury in the bitterest cold.”*

The old man stopped from his work as the musing figure of his guest darkened the prospect before him, and said—

“A pleasant time, sir, for the gardener!”

“Ay, is it so? You must miss the fruits and flowers of summer.”

“Well, sir—but we are now paying back the garden for the good things it has given us. It is like taking

* HENRY PEACHAM.

care of a friend in old age, who has been kind to us when he was young."

Walter smiled at the quaint amiability of the idea.

"'Tis a winning thing, sir, a garden! It brings us an object every day; and that's what I think a man ought to have if he wishes to lead a happy life."

"It is true," said Walter; and mine host was encouraged to continue by the attention and affable countenance of the stranger, for he was a physiognomist in his way.

"And then, sir, we have no disappointment in these objects;—the soil is not ungrateful, as they say men are—though I have not often found them so, by the by. What we sow we reap. I have an old book, sir, lying in my little parlour, all about fishing, and full of so many pretty sayings about a country life, and meditation, and so forth, that it does one as much good as a sermon to look into it. But to my mind, all those sayings are more applicable to a gardener's life than a fisherman's."

"It is a less cruel life, certainly," said Walter.

"Yes, sir; and then the scenes one makes one's self, the flowers one plants with one's own hand, one enjoys more than all the beauties which don't owe us anything; at least so it seems to me. I have always been thankful to the accident that made me take to gardening."

"And what was that?"

"Why, sir, you must know there was a great scholar, though he was but a youth then, living in this town

some years ago, and he was very curious in plants, and flowers, and suchlike. I have heard the parson say, he knew more of those innocent matters than any man in this country. At that time I was not in so flourishing a way of business as I am at present. I kept a little inn in the outskirts of the town ; and having formerly been a gamekeeper of my Lord ——'s, I was in the habit of eking out my little profits by accompanying gentlemen in fishing or snipe-shooting. So one day, sir, I went out fishing with a strange gentleman from London, and, in a very quiet retired spot some miles off, he stopped and plucked some herbs that seemed to me common enough, but which he declared were most curious and rare things, and he carried them carefully away. I heard afterwards he was a great herbalist, I think they call it, but he was a very poor fisher. Well, sir, I thought the next morning of Mr Aram, our great scholar and botanist, and fancied it would please him to know of these bits of grass : so I went and called upon him, and begged leave to go and show the spot to him. So we walked there ; and certainly, sir, of all the men that ever I saw, I never met one that wound round your heart like this same Eugene Aram. He was then exceedingly poor, but he never complained ; and was much too proud for any one to dare to offer him relief. He lived quite alone, and usually avoided every one in his walks ; but, sir, there was something so engaging and patient in his manner, and his voice, and his pale, mild countenance, which, young as he was then—for he was not a year or two above

twenty—was marked with sadness and melancholy, that it quite went to your heart when you met him or spoke to him.—Well, sir, we walked to the place, and very much delighted he seemed with the green things I showed him ; and as I was always of a communicative temper—rather a gossip, sir, my neighbours say—I made him smile now and then by my remarks. He seemed pleased with me, and talked to me going home about flowers, and gardening, and suchlike ; and sure it was better than a book to hear him. And after that, when we came across one another, he would not shun me as he did others, but let me stop and talk to him ; and then I asked his advice about a wee farm I thought of taking, and he told me many curious things which, sure enough, I found quite true, and brought me in afterwards a deal of money. But we talked much about gardening, for I loved to hear him talk on those matters ; and so, sir, I was struck by all he said, and could not rest till I took to gardening myself ; and ever since I have gone on, more pleased with it every day of my life. Indeed, sir, I think these harmless pursuits make a man's heart better and kinder to his fellow-creatures ; and I always take more pleasure in reading the Bible, specially the New Testament, after having spent the day in the garden. Ah, well, I should like to know what has become of that poor gentleman.”

“I can relieve your honest heart about him. Mr Aram is living in ——, well off in the world, and universally liked ; though he still keeps to his old habits of reserve.”

“Ay, indeed, sir! I have not heard anything that pleased me more this many a day.”

“Pray,” said Walter, after a moment’s pause, “do you remember the circumstance of a Mr Clarke appearing in this town, and leaving it in a very abrupt and mysterious manner?”

“Do I mind it, sir? Yes, indeed. It made a great noise in Knaresborough—there were many suspicions of foul play about it. For my part, I too had my thoughts, but that’s neither here nor there;” and the old man recommenced weeding with great diligence.

“My friend,” said Walter, mastering his emotion, “you would serve me more deeply than I can express, if you would give me any information, any conjecture respecting this—this Mr Clarke. I have come hither solely to make inquiry after his fate: in a word, he is—or was—a near relative of mine!”

The old man looked wistfully in Walter’s face. “Indeed,” said he, slowly, “you are welcome, sir, to all I know; but that is very little, or nothing rather. But will you turn up this walk, sir? it’s more retired. Did you ever hear of one Richard Houseman?”

“Houseman! yes. He knew my poor——, I mean he knew Clarke: he said Clarke was in his debt when he left the town so suddenly.”

The old man shook his head mysteriously, and looked round. “I will tell you,” said he, laying his hand on Walter’s arm, and speaking in his ear; “I would not accuse any one wrongfully, but I have my doubts that Houseman murdered him.”

“Great God!” murmured Walter, clinging to a post for support. “Go on—heed me not—for mercy’s sake go on.”

“Nay, I know nothing certain—nothing certain, believe me,” said the old man, shocked at the effect his words had produced; “it may be better than I think for, and my reasons are not very strong, but you shall hear them. Mr Clarke, you know, came to this town to receive a legacy—you know the particulars?”

Walter impatiently nodded assent.

“Well, though he seemed in poor health, he was a lively careless man, who liked any company who would sit and tell stories, and drink o’ nights; not a silly man exactly, but a weak one. Now of all the idle persons of this town, Richard Houseman was the most inclined to this way of life. He had been a soldier—had wandered a good deal about the world—was a bold, talking, reckless fellow—of a character thoroughly profligate; and there were many stories afloat about him, though none were clearly made out. In short, he was suspected of having occasionally taken to the high-road; and a stranger, who stopped once at my little inn, assured me privately, that though he could not positively swear to his person, he felt convinced that he had been stopped a year before on the London road by Houseman. Notwithstanding all this, as Houseman had some respectable connections in the town—among his relations, by the by, was Mr Aram—as he was a thoroughly boon-companion—a good shot—a bold rider—excellent at a song, and very cheerful and merry, he was not without

as much company as he pleased ; and the first night he and Mr Clarke came together, they grew mighty intimate ; indeed it seemed as if they had met before. On the night Mr Clarke disappeared, I had been on an excursion with some gentlemen ; and in consequence of the snow, which had been heavy during the latter part of the day, I did not return to Knaresborough till past midnight. In walking through the town, I perceived two men engaged in earnest conversation : one of them, I am sure, was Clarke ; the other was wrapped up in a greatcoat, with the cape over his face ; but the watchman had met the same man alone at an earlier hour, and, putting aside the cape, perceived that it was Houseman. No one else was seen with Clarke after that hour."

"But was not Houseman examined?"

"Slightly ; and deposed that he had been spending the night with Eugene Aram ; that on leaving Aram's house, he met Clarke, and wondering that he, the latter, an invalid, should be out at so late an hour, he walked some way with him in order to learn the cause ; but that Clarke seemed confused, and was reserved, and on his guard, and at last wished him good-by abruptly, and turned away. That he, Houseman, had no doubt he left the town that night with the intention of defrauding his creditors, and making off with some jewels he had borrowed from Mr Elmore."

"But, Aram—was this suspicious, nay, abandoned character—this Houseman—intimate with Aram?"

"Not at all ; but being distantly related, and House-

man being a familiar, pushing sort of a fellow, Aram could not, perhaps, always shake him off; and Aram allowed that Houseman had spent the evening with him."

"And no suspicion rested on Aram?"

The host turned round in amazement.—"Heavens above, no! One might as well suspect the lamb of eating the wolf!"

But not thus thought Walter Lester: the wild words occasionally uttered by the student—his lone habits—his frequent starts and colloquy with self, all of which had, even from the first, it has been seen, excited Walter's suspicion of former guilt, that had murdered the mind's wholesome sleep, now rushed with tenfold force upon his memory.

"But no other circumstance transpired? Is this your whole ground for suspicion—the mere circumstance of Houseman's being last seen with Clarke?"

"Consider also the dissolute and bold character of Houseman. Clarke evidently had his jewels and money with him—they were not left in the house. What a temptation to one who was more than suspected of having in the course of his life taken to plunder? Houseman shortly afterwards left the country. He has never returned to the town since, though his daughter lives here with his wife's mother, and has occasionally gone up to town to see him."

"And Aram—he also left Knaresborough soon after this mysterious event?"

"Yes! an old aunt at York, who had never assisted

him during her life, died and bequeathed him a legacy about a month afterwards. On receiving it, he naturally went to London—the best place for such clever scholars.”

“Ha ! But are you sure that the aunt died—that the legacy was left ? Might this be no tale to give an excuse to the spending of money otherwise acquired ? ”

Mine host looked almost with anger on Walter.

“It is clear,” said he, “you know nothing of Eugene Aram, or you would not speak thus. But I can satisfy your doubts on this head. I knew the old lady well, and my wife was at York when she died. Besides, every one here knows something of the will, for it was rather an eccentric one.”

Walter paused irresolutely. “Will you accompany me,” he asked, “to the house in which Mr Clarke lodged—and, indeed, to any other place where it may be prudent to institute inquiry ? ”

“Certainly, sir, with the biggest pleasure,” said mine host ; “but you must first try my dame’s butter and eggs. It is time to breakfast.”

We may suppose that Walter’s simple meal was soon over ; and growing impatient and restless to commence his inquiries, he descended from his solitary apartment to the little back-room behind the bar, in which he had, on the night before, seen mine host and his better-half at supper. It was a snug, small, wainscoted room ; fishing-rods were neatly arranged against the wall, which was also decorated by a portrait of the landlord himself, two old Dutch pictures of fruit and

game, a long, quaint-fashioned fowling-piece, and, opposite the fireplace, a noble stag's head and antlers. On the window-seat lay the Izaak Walton to which the old man had referred; the Family Bible, with its green baize cover, and the frequent marks peeping out from its venerable pages; and, close nestling to it, recalling that beautiful sentence, "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not," several of those little volumes with gay bindings, and marvellous contents of fay and giant, which delight the hearth-spelled urchin, and which were "the source of golden hours" to the old man's grandchildren, in their respite from "learning's little tenements,"—

"Where sits the dame, disguised in look profound,
And eyes her fairy throng, and turns her wheel around." *

Mine host was still employed by a huge brown loaf and some baked pike; and mine hostess, a quiet and serene old lady, was alternately regaling herself and a large brindled cat from a plate of "toasten cheer."

While the old man was hastily concluding his repast, a little knock at the door was heard, and presently an elderly gentleman in black put his head into the room, and, perceiving the stranger, would have drawn back; but both landlady and landlord, bustling up, entreated him to enter by the appellation of Mr Summers. And then, as the gentleman smilingly yielded to the invitation, the landlady, turning to Walter, said—"Our clergyman, sir: and though I say it afore his face,

* SHENSTONE'S *Schoolmistress*.

there is not a man who, if Christian virtues were considered, ought so soon to be a bishop."

"Hush! my good lady," said Mr Summers, laughing as he bowed to Walter. "You see, sir, that it is no trifling advantage to a Knaresborough reputation to have our hostess's good word. But, indeed," turning to the landlady, and assuming a grave and impressive air, "I have little mind for jesting now. You know poor Jane Houseman—a mild, quiet, blue-eyed creature—she died at daybreak this morning! Her father had come from London expressly to see her: she died in his arms, and, I hear, he is almost in a state of frenzy."

The host and hostess signified their commiseration. "Poor little girl!" said the latter, wiping her eyes; "hers was a hard fate, and she felt it, child as she was. Without the care of a mother—and such a father! Yet he was fond of her."

"My reason for calling on you was this," renewed the clergyman, addressing the host; "you knew Houseman formerly; me he always shunned, and, I fancy, ridiculed. He is in distress now, and all that is forgotten. Will you seek him, and inquire if anything in my power can afford him consolation? He may be poor: I can pay for the poor child's burial. I loved her; she was the best girl at Mrs Summers's school."

"Certainly, sir, I will seek him," said the landlord, hesitating: and then, drawing the clergyman aside, he informed him in a whisper of his engagement with Walter, and with the present pursuit and meditated inquiry of his guest; not forgetting to insinuate his

suspicion of the guilt of the man whom he was now called upon to compassionate.

The clergyman mused a little ; and then, approaching Walter, offered his services in the stead of the publican in so frank and cordial a manner, that Walter at once accepted them.

“ Let us come now, then,” said the good curate—for he was but the curate—seeing Walter’s impatience ; “ and first we will go to the house in which Clarke lodged : I know it well.”

The two gentlemen now commenced their expedition. Summers was no contemptible antiquary ; and he sought to beguile the nervous impatience of his companion by dilating on the attractions of the ancient and memorable town to which his purpose had brought him.

“ Remarkable,” said the curate, “ alike in history and tradition ; look yonder ” (pointing above, as an opening in the road gave to view the frowning and beetled ruins of the shattered castle) : “ you would be at some loss to recognise now the truth of old Leland’s description of that once stout and gallant bulwark of the North, when he ‘ numbrid 11 or 12 towres in the walles of the castel, and one very fayre beside in the second area.’ In that castle, the four knightly murderers of the haughty Becket (the Wolsey of his age) remained for a whole year, defying the weak justice of the times. There, too, the unfortunate Richard II.—the Stuart of the Plantagenets—passed some portion of his bitter imprisonment. And there, after the battle

of Marston Moor, waved the banners of the loyalists against the soldiers of Lilburne. It was made yet more touchingly memorable at that time, as you may have heard, by an instance of filial piety. The town was greatly straitened for want of provisions ; a youth, whose father was in the garrison, was accustomed nightly to get into the deep dry moat, climb up the glacis, and put provisions through a hole, where the father stood ready to receive them. He was perceived at length ; the soldiers fired on him. He was taken prisoner and sentenced to be hanged in the sight of the besieged, in order to strike terror into those who might be similarly disposed to render assistance to the garrison. Fortunately, however, this disgrace was spared the memory of Lilburne and the republican arms. With great difficulty, a certain lady obtained his respite ; and after the conquest of the place, and the departure of the troops, the adventurous son was released."

"A fit subject for your local poets," said Walter, whom stories of this sort, from the nature of his own enterprise, especially affected.

"Yes ; but we boast but few minstrels since the young Aram left us. The castle then, once the residence of John of Gaunt, was dismantled and destroyed. Many of the houses we shall pass have been built from its massive ruins. It is singular, by the way, that it was twice captured by men of the name of Lilburn, or Lillburne ; once in the reign of Edward II., once as I have related. On looking over historical

records, we are surprised to find how often certain names have been fatal to certain spots ; and this reminds me, by the way, that we boast the origin of the English sibyl, the venerable Mother Shipton. The wild rock, at whose foot she is said to have been born, is worthy of the tradition."

"You spoke just now," said Walter, who had not very patiently suffered the curate thus to ride his hobby, "of Eugene Aram ; you knew him well ?"

"Nay : he suffered not any to do that ! He was a remarkable youth. I have noted him from his childhood upward, long before he came to Knaresborough, till on leaving this place, fourteen years back, I lost sight of him.—Strange, musing, solitary from a boy : but what accomplishment of learning he had reached ! Never did I see one whom Nature so emphatically marked to be GREAT. I often wonder that his name has not long ere this been more universally noised abroad, whatever he attempted was stamped with such signal success. I have by me some scattered pieces of his poetry when a boy : they were given me by his poor father, long since dead ; and are full of a dim, shadowy anticipation of future fame. Perhaps, yet, before he dies—he is still young—the presentiment will be realised. You, too, know him, then ?"

"Yes ! I have known him. Stay—dare I ask you a question, a fearful question ? Did suspicion ever, in your mind, in the mind of any one, rest on Aram, as concerned in the mysterious disappearance of my—of Clarke ? His acquaintance with Houseman, who *was*

suspected ; Houseman's visit to Aram that night ; his previous poverty—so extreme, if I hear rightly ; his after riches—though they perhaps *may* be satisfactorily accounted for ; his leaving this town so shortly after the disappearance I refer to ;—these alone might not create suspicion in me, but I have seen the man in moments of reverie and abstraction, I have listened to strange and broken words, I have noted a sudden, keen, and angry susceptibility to any unmeant appeal to a less peaceful or less innocent remembrance. And there seems to me inexplicably to hang over his heart some gloomy recollection, which I cannot divest myself from imagining to be that of guilt.”

Walter spoke quickly, and in great though half-suppressed excitement ; the more kindled from observing that as he spoke, Summers changed countenance, and listened as with painful and uneasy attention.

“ I will tell you,” said the curate, after a short pause (lowering his voice)—“ I will tell you : Aram did undergo examination—I was present at it : but from his character, and the respect universally felt for him, the examination was close and secret. He was not, mark me, suspected of the murder of the unfortunate Clarke, nor was any suspicion of murder generally entertained until all means of discovering Clarke were found wholly unavailing, but of sharing with Houseman some part of the jewels with which Clarke was known to have left the town. This suspicion of robbery could not, however, be brought home, even to Houseman, and Aram was satisfactorily acquitted from the imputation.

But in the minds of some present at that examination a doubt lingered, and this doubt certainly deeply wounded a man so proud and susceptible. This, I believe, was the real reason of his quitting Knaresborough almost immediately after that examination. And some of us, who felt for him, and were convinced of his innocence, persuaded the others to hush up the circumstance of his examination ; nor has it generally transpired, even to this day, when the whole business is well-nigh forgot. But as to his subsequent improvement in circumstances, there is no doubt of his aunt's having left him a legacy sufficient to account for it."

Walter bowed his head, and felt his suspicions waver, when the curate renewed :—

"Yet it is but fair to tell you, who seem so deeply interested in the fate of Clarke, that since that period rumours have reached my ear that the woman at whose house Aram lodged has from time to time dropped words that require explanation—hints that she could tell a tale—that she knows more than men will readily believe—nay, once she is even reported to have said that the life of Eugene Aram was in her power."

"Father of mercy ! and did Inquiry sleep on words so calling for its liveliest examination ?"

"Not wholly. When the words were reported to me, I went to the house, but found the woman, whose habits and character are low and worthless, was abrupt and insolent in her manner ; and after in vain endeavouring to call forth some explanation of the words she was said to have uttered, I left the house fully per-

suaded that she had only given vent to a meaningless boast, and that the idle words of a disorderly gossip could not be taken as evidence against a man of the blameless character and austere habits of Aram. Since, however, you have now reawakened investigation, we will visit her before you leave the town : and it may be as well, too, that Houseman should undergo a further investigation before we suffer him to depart."

"I thank you ! I thank you ! I will not let slip one thread of this dark clue !"

"And now," said the curate, pointing to a decent house, "we have reached the lodging Clarke occupied in the town !"

An old man of respectable appearance opened the door, and welcomed the curate and his companion with an air of cordial respect, which attested the well-deserved popularity of the former.

"We have come," said the curate, "to ask you some questions respecting Daniel Clarke, whom you remember as your lodger. This gentleman is a relation of his, and interested deeply in his fate !"

"What, sir !" quoth the old man ; "and have *you*, his relation, never heard of Mr Clarke since he left the town ? Strange !—this room, this very room, was the one Mr Clarke occupied, and next to this" (here—opening a door) "was his bedchamber !"

It was not without powerful emotion that Walter found himself thus within the apartment of his lost father. What a painful, what a gloomy, yet sacred interest, everything around instantly assumed ! The

old-fashioned and heavy chairs—the brown wainscot walls—the little cupboard, recessed as it were to the right of the fireplace, and piled with morsels of Indian china and long taper wine-glasses—the small window-panes set deep in the wall, giving a dim view of a bleak and melancholy-looking garden in the rear—yea, the very floor he trod—the very table on which he leaned—the very hearth, dull and fireless as it was, opposite his gaze—all took a familiar meaning in his eye, and breathed a household voice into his ear. And when he entered the inner room, how, even to suffocation, were those strange, half-sad, yet not all bitter emotions increased. There was the bed on which his father had rested on the night before——what? perhaps his murder! The bed, probably a relic from the castle, when its antique furniture was set up to public sale, was hung with faded tapestry, and above its dark and polished summit were hearse-like and heavy trappings. Old commodes of rudely-carved oak, a discoloured glass in a japan frame, a ponderous arm-chair of Elizabethan fashion, and covered with the same tapestry as the bed, altogether gave that uneasy and sepulchral impression to the mind so commonly produced by the relics of a mouldering and forgotten antiquity.

“It looks cheerless, sir,” said the owner: “but then we have not had any regular lodger for years; it is just the same as when Mr Clarke lived here. But bless you, sir, he made the dull rooms look gay enough. He was a blithesome gentleman. He and his friends,

Mr Houseman especially, used to make the walls ring again when they were over their cups !”

“ It might have been better for Mr Clarke,” said the curate, “ had he chosen his comrades with more discretion. Houseman was not a creditable, perhaps not a *safe*, companion.”

“ That was no business of mine then,” quoth the lodging-letter ; “ but it might be now, since I have been a married man !”

The curate smiled. “ Perhaps you, Mr Moor, bore a part in those revels ?”

“ Why, indeed, Mr Clarke would occasionally make me take a glass or so, sir.”

“ And you must then have heard the conversations that took place between Houseman and him ? Did Mr Clarke ever, in those conversations, intimate an intention of leaving the town soon ? And where, if so, did he talk of going ?”

“ Oh ! first to London. I have often heard him talk of going to London, and then taking a trip to see some relations of his in a distant part of the country. I remember his caressing a little boy of my brother’s : you know Jack, sir—not a little boy now, almost as tall as this gentleman. ‘ Ah,’ said he, with a sort of sigh, ‘ ah ! I have a boy at home about this age—when shall I see him again ?’ ”

“ When indeed !” thought Walter, turning away his face at this anecdote, to him so naturally affecting.

“ And the night that Clarke left you, were you aware of his absence ?”

“No !, he went to his room at his usual hour, which was late, and the next morning I found his bed had not been slept in, and that he was gone—gone with all his jewels, money, and valuables ; heavy luggage he had none. He was a cunning gentleman ; he never loved paying a bill. He was greatly in debt in different parts of the town, though he had not been here long. He ordered everything, and paid for nothing.”

Walter groaned. It was his father’s character exactly—partly, it might be, from dishonest principles superadded to the earlier feelings of his nature, but partly also from that temperament, at once careless and procrastinating, which, more often than vice, loses men the advantage of reputation.

“Then in your own mind, and from your knowledge of him,” renewed the curate, “you would suppose that Clarke’s disappearance was intentional ; that, though nothing has since been heard of him, none of the blacker rumours afloat were well founded ?”

“I confess, sir, begging this gentleman’s pardon, who you say is a relation—I confess *I* see no reason to think otherwise.”

“Was Mr Aram, Eugene Aram, ever a guest of Clarke’s ? Did you ever see them together ?”

“Never at this house. I fancy Houseman once presented Mr Aram to Clarke, and that they may have met and conversed some two or three times—not more, I believe ; they were scarcely congenial spirits, sir.”

Walter, having now recovered his self-possession, entered into the conversation ; and endeavoured, by as

minute an examination as his ingenuity could suggest, to obtain some additional light upon the mysterious subject so deeply at his heart. Nothing, however, of any effectual import was obtained from the good man of the house. He had evidently persuaded himself that Clarke's disappearance was easily accounted for, and would scarcely lend attention to any other suggestion than that of Clarke's dishonesty. Nor did his recollection of the meetings between Houseman and Clarke furnish him with anything worthy of narration. With a spirit somewhat damped and disappointed, Walter, accompanied by the curate, recommenced his expedition.

CHAPTER XI.

Grief in a Ruffian.—The Chamber of Early Death.—A Homely yet Momentous Confession.—The Earth's Secrets.—The Cavern.—The Accusation.

All is not well,
I doubt some foul play.

Foul deeds will rise,
Though all the earth o'erwhelm them, to men's eyes.—*Hamlet.*

As they passed through the street, they perceived three or four persons standing round the open door of a house of ordinary description, the windows of which were partially closed.

“It is the house,” said the curate, “in which Houseman’s daughter died—poor—poor child! Yet why mourn for the young? Better that the light cloud should fade away into heaven with the morning breath, than travel through the weary day to gather in darkness and end in storm.”

“Ah, sir!” said an old man, leaning on his stick, and lifting his hat in obeisance to the curate, “the father is within, and takes on bitterly. He drives them all away from the room, and sits moaning by the bedside, as if he was a-going out of his mind. Won’t your reverence go in to him a bit?”

The curate looked at Walter inquiringly. "Perhaps," said the latter, "you had better go in: I will wait without."

While the curate hesitated, they heard a voice in the passage, and presently Houseman was seen at the far end, driving some women before him with vehement gesticulations.

"I tell you, ye hell-hags!" shrieked his harsh and now straining voice, "that ye suffered her to die. Why did ye not send to London for physicians? Am I not rich enough to buy my child's life at any price? By the living——! I would have turned your very bodies into gold to have saved her. But she's DEAD! and I——out of my sight——out of my way!" And with his hands clenched, his brows knit, and his head uncovered, Houseman sallied forth from the door, and Walter recognised the traveller of the preceding night. He stopped abruptly as he saw the little knot without, and scowled round at each of them with a malignant and ferocious aspect. "Very well—it's very well, neighbours!" said he at length, with a fierce laugh: "this is kind! You have come to welcome Richard Houseman home, have ye?—Good, good! Not to gloat at his distress?—Lord! no. Ye have no idle curiosity—no prying, searching, gossiping devil within ye, that makes ye love to flock, and gape, and chatter, when poor men suffer! this is all pure compassion; and Houseman, the good, gentle, peaceful, honest Houseman, you feel for *him*,—I know you do! Harkye: be-gone—away—march—tramp—or—— Ha, ha! there

they go—there they go !” laughing wildly again as the frightened neighbours shrunk from the spot, leaving only Walter and the clergyman with the childless man.

“Be comforted, Houseman !” said Summers, soothingly : “it is a dreadful affliction that you have sustained. I knew your daughter well : you may have heard her speak of me. Let us in, and try what heavenly comfort there is in prayer.”

“Prayer ! pooh ! I am Richard Houseman !”

“Lives there one man for whom prayer is unavailing ?”

“Out, canter, out ! My pretty Jane !—and she laid her head on my bosom—and looked up in my face—and so—died !”

“Come,” said the curate, placing his hand on Houseman’s arm—“come.”

Before he could proceed, Houseman, who was muttering to himself, shook him off roughly, and hurried away up the street ; but after he had gone a few paces, he turned back, and, approaching the curate, said, in a more collected tone—“I pray you, sir, since you are a clergyman (I recollect your face, and I recollect Jane said you had been good to her)—I pray you go and say a few words over her ; but stay—don’t bring in my name—you understand. I don’t wish God to recollect that there lives such a man as he who now addresses you. Halloo ! [shouting to the women], my hat, and stick too. Fal lal la ! fal la !—why should these things make us play the madman ! It is a fine day, sir : we shall have a late winter. Curse the

b——! how long she is! Yet the hat was left below. But when a death is in the house, sir, it throws things into confusion: don't you find it so?"

Here one of the women, pale, trembling, and tearful, brought the ruffian his hat; and, placing it deliberately on his head, and bowing with a dreadful and convulsive attempt to smile, he walked slowly away, and disappeared.

"What strange mummers grief makes!" said the curate. "It is an appalling spectacle when it thus wrings out feeling from a man of that mould! But, pardon me, my young friend; let me tarry here for a moment."

"I will enter the house with you," said Walter. And the two men walked in, and in a few moments they stood within the chamber of death.

The face of the deceased had not yet suffered the last withering change. Her young countenance was hushed and serene; and, but for the fixedness of the smile, you might have thought the lips moved. So delicate, fair, and gentle were the features, that it was scarcely possible to believe such a scion could spring from such a stock; and it seemed no longer wonderful that a thing so young, so innocent, so lovely, and so early blighted, should have touched that reckless and dark nature which rejected all other invasion of the softer emotions. The curate wiped his eyes, and, kneeling down, prayed, if not for the dead (who, as our Church teaches, are beyond human intercession), perhaps for the father she had left on earth,

more to be pitied of the two! Nor to Walter was the scene without something more impressive and thrilling than its mere pathos alone. He, now standing beside the corpse of Houseman's child, was son to the man of whose murder Houseman had been suspected. The childless and the fatherless! might there be no retribution here!

When the curate's prayer was over, and he and Walter escaped from the incoherent blessings and complaints of the women of the house, they, with difficulty resisting the impression the scene had left upon their minds, once more resumed their errand.

"This is no time," said Walter, musingly, "for an examination of Houseman; yet it must not be forgotten."

The curate did not reply for some moments; and then, as an answer to the remark, observed that the conversation they anticipated with Aram's former hostess might throw some light on their researches. They now proceeded to another part of the town, and arrived at a lonely and desolate-looking house, which seemed to wear in its very appearance something strange, sad, and ominous. Some houses have an *expression*, as it were, in their outward aspect that sinks unaccountably into the heart—a dim oppressive eloquence, which dispirits and affects. You say, some story must be attached to those walls; some legendary interest, of a darker nature, ought to be associated with the mute stone and mortar: you feel a mingled awe and curiosity creep over you as you gaze. Such

was the description of the house that the young adventurer now surveyed. It was of antique architecture, not uncommon in old towns: gable-ends rose from the roof; dull, small, latticed panes were sunk deep in the grey, discoloured wall; the pale, in part, was broken and jagged; and rank weeds sprang up in the neglected garden, through which they walked towards the porch. The door was open; they entered, and found an old woman of coarse appearance sitting by the fireside, and gazing on space with that vacant stare which so often characterises the repose and relaxation of the uneducated poor. Walter felt an involuntary thrill of dislike come over him as he looked at the solitary inmate of the solitary house.

“Heyday, sir!” said she, in a grating voice; “and what now! Oh! Mr Summers, is it you? You’re welcome, sir. I wishes I could offer you a glass of summut, but the bottle’s dry—he! he!” pointing with a revolting grin to an empty bottle that stood on a niche within the hearth. “I don’t know how it is, sir, but I never wants to eat; but ah! ’tis the liquor that does un good!”

“You have lived a long time in this house?” said the curate.

“A long time—some thirty years an’ more.”

“You remember your lodger, Mr Aram?”

“A—well—yes!”

“An excellent man——”

“Humph.”

“A most admirable man!”

“A-humph! he!—humph! that’s neither here nor there.”

“Why, you don’t seem to think as all the rest of the world does with regard to him?”

“I knows what I knows.”

“Ah! by the by, you have some cock-and-a-bull story about him, I fancy; but you never could explain yourself; it is merely for the love of seeming wise that you invented it—eh, Goody?”

The old woman shook her head, and, crossing her hands on her knee, replied, with peculiar emphasis, but in a very low and whispered voice, “I could hang him!”

“Pooh!”

“Tell you I could!”

“Well, let’s have the story then!”

“No, no! I have not told it to ne’er a one yet; and I won’t for nothing. What will you give me?—Make it worth my while!”

“Tell us all, honestly, fairly, and fully, and you shall have five golden guineas. There, Goody.”

Roused by this promise, the dame looked up with more of energy than she had yet shown, and muttered to herself, rocking her chair to and fro, “Aha! why not? no fear now—both gone—can’t now murder the poor old cretur, as the wretch once threatened. Five golden guineas—five, did you say, sir—five?”

“Ay, and perhaps our bounty may not stop there,” said the curate.

Still the old woman hesitated, and still she muttered

to herself; but, after some further prelude, and some further enticement from the curate, the which we spare our reader, she came at length to the following narration:—

“It was on the 7th of February, in the year '44—yes, '44, about six o'clock in the evening, for I was a-washing in the kitchen—when Mr Aram called to me, an' desired of me to make a fire up-stairs, which I did; he then walked out. Some hours afterwards, it might be two in the morning, I was lying awake, for I was mighty bad with the toothache, when I heard a noise below, and two or three voices. On this I was greatly afeard, and got out o' bed, and, opening the door, I saw Mr Houseman and Mr Clarke coming up-stairs to Mr Aram's room, and Mr Aram followed them. They shut the door, and stayed there, it might be an hour. Well, I could not a-think what could make so shy an' resarved a gentleman as Mr Aram admit these 'ere wild madcaps like at that hour; an' I lay awake a-thinking an' a-thinking till I heard the door open agin, an' I went to listen at the keyhole, an' Mr Clarke said, 'It will soon be morning, and we must get off.' They then all three left the house; but I could not sleep, an' I got up afore five o'clock, and about that hour Mr Aram an' Mr Houseman returned, and they both glowered at me, as if they did not like to find me a-stirring; an' Mr Aram went into his room, and Houseman turned and frowned at me as black as night.—Lord have mercy on me! I see him now! An' I was sadly

feared, an' I listened at the keyhole, an' I heard Houseman say, 'If the woman comes in, she'll tell.' 'What can she tell?' said Mr Aram: 'poor simple thing, she knows nothing.' With that, Houseman said, says he, 'If she tells that I am here, it will be enough; but, however,'—with a shocking oath—'we'll take an opportunity to shoot her.'

"On that I was so frightened that I went away back to my own room, and did not stir till they had a-gone out, and then——"

"What time was that?"

"About seven o'clock. Well, you put me out! Where was I?—Well, I went into Mr Aram's room, an' I seed they had been burning a fire, an' that all the ashes were taken out o' the grate; so I went an' looked at the rubbish behind the house, and there, sure enough, I seed the ashes, and among 'em several bits o' cloth and linen which seemed to belong to wearing-apparel; and there, too, was a handkerchief which I had obsarved Houseman wear (for it was a very curious handkerchief, all spotted) many's the time, and there was blood on it, 'bout the size of a shilling. An' afterwards I seed Houseman, an' I showed him the handkerchief; and I said to him, 'What has come of Clarke?' an' he frowned, and, looking at me, said, 'Hark ye, I know not what you mean; but, as sure as the devil keeps watch for souls, I will shoot you through the head if you ever let that d—d tongue of yours let slip a single word about Clarke, or me, or Mr Aram; so look to yourself!'

“An’ I was all scared, and trimbled from limb to limb ; an’ for two whole yearn afterwards (long arter Aram and Houseman were both gone) I niver could so much as open my lips on the matter ; and afore he went, Mr Aram would sometimes look at me, not sternly-like as the villain Houseman, but as if he would read to the bottom of my heart. Oh ! I was as if you had taken a mountain off o’ me, when he an’ Houseman left the town ; for sure as the sun shines, I believes, from what I have now said, that they two murdered Clarke on that same February night. An’ now, Mr Summers, I feels more easy than I has felt for many a long day ; an’ if I have not told it afore, it is because I thought of Houseman’s frown, and his horrid words ; but summat of it would ooze out of my tongue now an’ then, for it’s a hard thing, sir, to know a secret o’ that sort and be quiet and still about it ; and, indeed, I was not the same cretur when I knew it as I was afore, for it made me take to anything rather than thinking ; and that’s the reason, sir, I lost the good crakter I used to have.”

Such, somewhat abridged from its “says he” and “says I”—its involutions and its tautologies—was the story which Walter held his breath to hear. But events thicken, and the maze is nearly thridden.

“Not a moment now should be lost,” said the curate, as they left the house. “Let us at once proceed to a very able magistrate, to whom I can introduce you, and who lives a little way out of the town.”

“As you will,” said Walter, in an altered and hollow

voice. "I am as a man standing on an eminence, who views the whole scene he is to travel over stretched before him, but is dizzy and bewildered by the height which he has reached. I know—I feel—that I am on the brink of fearful and dread discoveries ;—pray God that—— But heed me not, sir—heed me not—let us on—on !"

It was now approaching towards the evening ; and as they walked on, having left the town, the sun poured his last beams on a group of persons that appeared hastily collecting and gathering round a spot, well known in the neighbourhood of Knaresborough, called Thistle Hill.

"Let us avoid the crowd," said the curate. "Yet what, I wonder, can be its cause?" While he spoke, two peasants hurried by towards the throng.

"What is the meaning of the crowd yonder?" asked the curate.

"I don't know exactly, your honour ; but I hear as how Jem Ninnings, digging for stone for the limekiln, have dug out a big wooden chest."

A shout from the group broke in on the peasant's explanation—a sudden, simultaneous shout, but not of joy ; something of dismay and horror seemed to breathe in the sound.

Walter looked at the curate : an impulse—a sudden instinct—seemed to attract them involuntarily to the spot whence that sound arose ;—they quickened their pace—they made their way through the throng. A deep chest, that had been violently forced, stood before

them : its contents had been dragged to day, and now lay on the sward—a bleached and mouldering skeleton ! Several of the bones were loose, and detached from the body. A general hubbub of voices from the spectators—inquiry—guess—fear—wonder—rang confusedly round.

“Yes !” said one old man, with grey hair, leaning on a pickaxe : “it is now about fourteen years since the Jew pedlar disappeared ;—these are probably his bones—he was supposed to have been murdered !”

“Nay !” screeched a woman, drawing back a child who, all unalarmed, was about to touch the ghastly relics—“Nay, the pedlar was heard of afterwards ! I’ll tell ye, ye may be sure these are the bones of Clarke—Daniel Clarke, whom the country was so stirred about when we were young !”

“Right, dame, right ! It is Clarke’s skeleton,” was the simultaneous cry. And Walter, pressing forward, stood over the bones, and waved his hand, as to guard them from further insult. His sudden appearance—his tall stature—his wild gesture—the horror—the paleness—the grief of his countenance—struck and appalled all present. He remained speechless, and a sudden silence succeeded the late clamour.

“And what do you here, fools ?” said a voice, abruptly. The spectators turned—a newcomer had been added to the throng ;—it was Richard Houseman. His dress, loose and disarranged—his flushed cheeks and rolling eyes—betrayed the source of consolation to which he had flown from his domestic affliction. “What do ye

here?" said he, reeling forward. "Ha! human bones! and whose may they be, think ye?"

"They are Clarke's!" said the woman who had first given rise to that supposition. "Yes, we think they are Daniel Clarke's—he who disappeared some years ago!" cried two or three voices in concert.

"Clarke's?" repeated Houseman, stooping down and picking up a thigh-bone, which lay at a little distance from the rest—"Clarke's? ha! ha! they are no more Clarke's than mine!"

"Behold!" shouted Walter, in a voice that rang from cliff to plain—and, springing forward, he seized Houseman with a giant's grasp—"Behold the murderer!"

As if the avenging voice of Heaven had spoken, a thrilling, an electric conviction darted through the crowd. Each of the elder spectators remembered at once the person of Houseman, and the suspicion that had attached to his name.

"Seize him! seize him!" burst forth from twenty voices. "Houseman is the murderer!"

"Murderer!" faltered Houseman, trembling in the iron hands of Walter—"murderer of whom? I tell ye these are not Clarke's bones!"

"Where, then, do *they* lie?" cried his arrestor.

Pale—confused—conscience-stricken—the bewilderment of intoxication mingling with that of fear, Houseman turned a ghastly look around him, and, shrinking from the eyes of all, reading in the eyes of all his condemnation, he gasped out, "Search St Robert's Cave, in the turn at the entrance!"

“Away!” rang the deep voice of Walter, on the instant—“away!—to the Cave—to the Cave!”

On the banks of the river Nid, whose waters keep an everlasting murmur to the crags and trees that overhang them, is a wild and dreary cavern, hollowed from a rock, which, according to tradition, was formerly the hermitage of one of those early enthusiasts who made their solitude in the sternest recesses of earth, and, from the austere thoughts and the bitterest penance, wrought their joyless offerings to the great Spirit of the lovely world. To this desolate spot, called, from the name of its once celebrated eremite, St Robert’s Cave, the crowd now swept, increasing its numbers as it advanced.

The old man who had discovered the unknown remains, which were gathered up and made a part of the procession, led the way; Houseman, placed between two strong and active men, went next; and Walter followed behind, fixing his eyes mutely upon the ruffian. The curate had had the precaution to send on before for torches, for the wintry evening now darkened around them, and the light from the torch-bearers, who met them at the cavern, cast forth its red and lurid flare at the mouth of the chasm. One of these torches Walter himself seized, and his was the first step that entered the gloomy passage. At this place and time, Houseman, who till then, throughout their short journey, had seemed to have recovered a sort of dogged self-possession, recoiled, and the big drops of fear or agony fell

fast from his brow. He was dragged forward forcibly into the cavern ; and now, as the space filled, and the torches flickered against the grim walls, glaring on faces which caught, from the deep and thrilling contagion of a common sentiment, one common expression, it was not well possible for the wildest imagination to conceive a scene better fitted for the unhallowed burialplace of the murdered dead.

The eyes of all now turned upon Houseman ; and he, after twice vainly endeavouring to speak, for the words died inarticulate and choked within him, advancing a few steps, pointed towards a spot on which, the next moment, fell the concentrated light of every torch. An indescribable and universal murmur, and then a breathless silence, ensued. On the spot which Houseman had indicated—with the head placed to the right, lay what once had been a human body !

“Can you swear,” said the priest, solemnly, as he turned to Houseman, “that these are the bones of Clarke ?”

“Before God, I can swear it !” replied Houseman, at length finding voice.

“MY FATHER !” broke from Walter’s lips, as he sank upon his knees ; and that exclamation completed the awe and horror which prevailed in the breasts of all present. Stung by the sense of the danger he had drawn upon himself, and despair and excitement restoring, in some measure, not only his natural hardihood but his natural astuteness, Houseman, here mastering his emotions, and making that effort which he

was afterwards enabled to follow up with an advantage to himself of which he could not then have dreamed ; —Houseman, I say, cried aloud—

“But *I* did not do the deed : *I* am not the murderer.”

“Speak out ! whom do you accuse ?” said the curate.

Drawing his breath hard, and setting his teeth, as with some steeled determination, Houseman replied—

“The murderer is Eugene Aram !”

“Aram !” shouted Walter, starting to his feet : “O God, thy hand hath directed me hither !” And suddenly and at once sense left him, and he fell, as if a shot had pierced through his heart, beside the remains of that father whom he had thus mysteriously discovered.

BOOK V.

CHAPTER I.

Grassdale.—The Morning of the Marriage.—The Crone's Gossip.—
The Bride at her Toilet.—The Arrival.

Jam veniet virgo, jam dicetur Hymenæus,
Hymen, O Hymenæe! Hymen ades, O Hymenæe! *
CATULLUS: *Carmen Nuptiale.*

It was now the morning in which Eugene Aram was to be married to Madeline Lester. The student's house had been set in order for the arrival of the bride; and though it was yet early morn, two old women, whom his domestic (now not the only one, for a buxom lass of eighteen had been transplanted from Lester's household to meet the additional cares that the change of circumstances brought to Aram's) had invited to assist her in arranging what was already arranged, were bustling about the lower apartments, and making matters, as they call it, "tidy."

* Now shall the virgin arrive; now shall be sung the Hymeneal.
—Hymen Hymenæus! Be present, O Hymen Hymenæus!

“Them flowers look but poor things after all,” muttered an old crone, whom our readers will recognise as Dame Darkmans, placing a bowl of exotics on the table. “They does not look nigh so cheerful as them as grows in the open air.”

“Tush ! Goody Darkmans,” said the second gossip. “They be much prettier and finer to my mind ; and so said Miss Nelly, when she plucked them last night and sent me down with them. They says there is not a blade o’ grass that the master does not know. He must be a good man to love the things of the field so.”

“Ho !” said Dame Darkmans—“ho ! when Joe Wrench was hanged for shooting the lord’s keeper, and he mounted the scaffold wid a nosegay in his hand, he said, in a peevish voice, says he, ‘Why does not they give me a tarnation ? I always loved them sort o’ flowers ; I wore them when I went a-courting Bess Lucas ; an’ I would like to die with one in my hand !’ so a man may like flowers, and be but a hempen dog after all !”

“Now don’t you, Goody ; be still, can’t you ! what a tale for a marriage-day !”

“Tally vally,” returned the grim hag ; “many a blessing carries a curse in its arms, as the new moon carries the old. This won’t be one of your happy weddings, I tell ye.”

“And why d’ye say that ?”

“Did you ever see a man with a look like that make a happy husband ?—No, no ; can ye fancy the merry

laugh o' childer in this house, or a babe on the father's knee, or the happy still smile on the mother's winsome face, some few year hence? No, Madge! the de'il has set his black claw on the man's brow."

"Hush! hush, Goody Darkmans, he may hear o' ye," said the second gossip, who, having now done all that remained to do, had seated herself down by the window; while the more ominous crone, leaning over Aram's oak chair, uttered from thence her sibyl bodings.

"No," replied Mother Darkmans—"I seed him go out an hour agone, when the sun was just on the rise; and I said, when I seed him stroam into the wood yonder, and the ould leaves splashed in the damp under his feet; and his hat was aboon his brows, and his lips went so; I said, says I, 'tis not the man that will make a hearth bright that would walk thus on his marriage-day. But I knows what I knows; and I minds what I seed last night."

"Why, what did you see last night?" asked the listener, with a trembling voice; for Mother Darkmans was a great teller of ghost and witch tales, and a certain ineffable awe of her dark gypsy features and malignant words had circulated pretty largely throughout the village.

"Why, I sat up here with the ould deaf woman, and we were a-drinking the health of the man and his wife that is to be, and it was nigh twelve o' the clock ere I minded it was time to go home. Well, so I puts on my cloak, and the moon was up, an' I goes along by the wood, and up by Fairlegh Field, an' I was singing

the ballad on Joe Wrench's hanging, for the spirats had made me gamesome, when I sees summut dark creep, creep, but iver so fast, arter me over the field, and making right ahead to the village. And I stands still, an' I was not a bit afeard ; but sure I thought it was no living cretur at the first sight. And so it comes up faster and faster, and then I sees it was not one thing, but a many, many things, and they darkened the whole field afore me. And what d'ye think they was?—a whole body o' grey rats, thousands and thousands on 'em, and they were making away from the out-buildings here. For sure they knew—the witch things—that an ill-luck sat on the spot. And so I stood aside by the tree, an' I laughed to look on the ugsome creturs, as they swept close by me, tramp, tramp ; an' they never heeded me a jot ; but some on 'em looked aslant at me with their glittering eyes, and showed their white teeth, as if they grinned, and were saying to me, 'Ha, ha ! Goody Darkmans, the house that we leave is a falling house ; for the devil will have his own.' ”

In some parts of the country, and especially in that where our scene is laid, no omen is more superstitiously believed evil than the departure of these loathsome animals from their accustomed habitation : the instinct which is supposed to make them desert an unsafe tenement is supposed also to make them predict, in desertion, ill-fortune to the possessor. But while the ears of the listening gossip were still tingling with this narration, the dark figure of the student passed the window, and the old women starting up, appeared in

all the bustle of preparation as Aram now entered the apartment.

“A happy day, your honour—a happy good-morning,” said both the crones in a breath ; but the blessing of the worse-natured was vented in so harsh a croak, that Aram turned round as if struck by the sound ; and still more disliking the well-remembered aspect of the person from whom it came, waved his hand impatiently, and bade them begone.

“A-whish—a-whish !” muttered Dame Darkmans—“to spake so to the poor ; but the rats never lie, the bonny things !”

Aram threw himself into his chair, and remained for some moments absorbed in a reverie, which did not bear the aspect of gloom. Then, walking once or twice to and fro the apartment, he stopped opposite the chimney-piece, over which were slung the firearms, which he never omitted to keep charged and primed.

“Humph !” he said, half aloud, “ye have been but idle servants ; and now ye are but little likely ever to requite the care I have bestowed upon you.”

With that, a faint smile crossed his features, and, turning away, he ascended the stairs that led to the lofty chamber in which he had been so often wont to out-watch the stars,

“The souls of systems, and the lords of life,
Through their wide empires.”

Before we follow him to his high and lonely retreat we will bring the reader to the manor-house, where all was already gladness and quiet but deep joy.

It wanted about three hours to that fixed for the marriage ; and Aram was not expected at the manor-house till an hour before the celebration of the event. Nevertheless, the bells were already ringing loudly and blithely ; and the near vicinity of the church to the house brought that sound, so inexpressibly buoyant and cheering, to the ears of the bride, with a noisy merriment that seemed like the hearty voice of an old-fashioned friend, who seeks in his greeting rather cordiality than discretion. Before her glass stood the beautiful, the virgin, the glorious form of Madeline Lester ; and Ellinor, with trembling hands (and a voice between a laugh and a cry), was braiding up her sister's rich hair, and uttering her hopes, her wishes, her congratulations. The small lattice was open, and the air came rather chillingly to the bride's bosom.

"It is a gloomy morning, dearest Nell," said she, shivering ; "the winter seems about to begin at last."

"Stay, I will shut the window ; the sun is struggling with the clouds at present, but I am sure it will clear up by-and-by. You don't—you don't leave us—the word must out—till evening."

"Don't cry !" said Madeline, half weeping herself ; and, sitting down, she drew Ellinor to her ; and the two sisters, who had never been parted since birth, exchanged tears that were natural, though scarcely the unmixed tears of grief.

"And what pleasant evenings we shall have," said Madeline, holding her sister's hands, "in the Christmas time ! You will be staying with us, you know ;

and that pretty old room in the north of the house Eugene has already ordered to be fitted up for you. Well, and my dear father, and dear Walter, who will be returned long ere then, will walk over to see us, and praise my housekeeping, and so forth. And then, after dinner, we will draw near the fire—I next to Eugene, and my father, our guest, on the other side of me, with his long grey hair, and his good fine face, with a tear of kind feeling in his eye: you know that look he has whenever he is affected? And at a little distance on the other side of the hearth will be you;—and Walter—I suppose we must make room for him. And Eugene, who will be then the liveliest of you all, shall read to us with his soft clear voice, or tell us all about the birds and flowers and strange things in other countries. And then, after supper, we will walk half-way home across that beautiful valley—beautiful even in winter—with my father and Walter, and count the stars, and take new lessons in astronomy, and hear tales about the astrologers and the alchemists, with their fine old dreams. Ah! it will be such a happy Christmas, Ellinor! And then, when spring comes, some fine morning—finer than this—when the birds are about, and the leaves getting green, and the flowers springing up every day, I shall be called in to help your toilet, as you have helped mine, and to go with you to church, though not, alas! as your bridesmaid. Ah! whom shall we have for that duty?”

“Pshaw!” said Ellinor, smiling through her tears.

While the sisters were thus engaged, and Madeline

was trying, with her innocent kindness of heart, to exhilarate the spirits, so naturally depressed, of her dotting sister, the sound of carriage-wheels was heard in the distance ; nearer, nearer ;—now the sound stopped, as at the gate ;—now fast, faster—fast as the postilions could ply whip, and the horses tear along, while the groups in the churchyard ran forth to gaze, and the bells rang merrily all the while, two chaises whirled by Madeline's window, and stopped at the porch of the house: the sisters had flown in surprise to the casement.

“ It is—it is—good God ! it is Walter,” cried El-linor ; “ but how pale he looks ! ”

“ And who are those strange men with him ? ” fal-tered Madeline, alarmed, though she knew not why.

CHAPTER II.

The Student alone in his Chamber.—The Interruption.—
Faithful Love.

Nequicquam thalamo graves
Hastas—
Vitabis, strepitumque, et celerem sequi
Ajacem.*—*Horat. Od. xv. lib. 1.*

ALONE in his favourite chamber, the instruments of science around him, and books, some of astronomical research, some of less lofty but yet abstruser lore, scattered on the tables, Eugene Aram indulged the last meditation he believed likely to absorb his thoughts before that great change of life which was to bless solitude with a companion.

“Yes,” said he, pacing the apartment with folded arms—“yes, all is safe! He will not again return; the dead sleeps now without a witness. I may lay this working brain upon the bosom that loves me, and not start at night and think that the soft hand around my neck is the hangman’s gripe. Back to thyself, henceforth and for ever, my busy heart! Let not thy secret stir from its gloomy depth! the seal is on the

* In vain within your nuptial chamber will you shun the deadly spears, the hostile shout, and Ajax eager in pursuit.

tomb ; henceforth be the spectre laid. Yes, I must smooth my brow, and teach my lip restraint, and smile and talk like other men. I have taken to my hearth a watch, tender, faithful, anxious—but a watch ! Farewell the unguarded hour !—the soul's relief in speech—the dark and broken, yet how grateful ! confidence with self—farewell ! And come thou veil ! subtle, close, unvarying, the everlasting curse of entire hypocrisy, that under thee, as night, the vexed world within may sleep, and stir not ! and all, in truth concealment, may seem repose !”

As he uttered these thoughts, the student paused and looked on the extended landscape that lay below. A heavy, chill, and comfortless mist sat saddening over the earth. Not a leaf stirred on the autumnal trees, but the moist damps fell slowly and with a mournful murmur upon the unwavering grass. The outline of the morning sun was visible, but it gave forth no lustre : a ring of watery and dark vapour girded the melancholy orb. Far at the entrance of the valley the wild fern showed red and faded, and the first march of the deadly winter was already heralded by that drear and silent desolation which cradles the winds and storms. But amidst this cheerless scene, the distant note of the merry marriage-bell floated by, like the good spirit of the wilderness, and the student rather paused to hearken to the note than to survey the scene.

“ *My* marriage-bell !” said he ; “ could I, two short years back, have dreamed of this ? *My* marriage-bell ! How fondly my poor mother, when first she learned

pride for her young scholar, would predict this day, and blend its festivities with the honour and the wealth *her* son was to acquire! Alas! can we have no science to count the stars and forebode the black eclipse of the future? But peace! peace! peace! I am, I will, I shall be happy now! Memory, I defy thee!"

He uttered the last words in a deep and intense tone, and turning away as the joyful peal again broke distinctly on his ear,—

"My marriage-bell! Oh, Madeline! how wondrously beloved: how unspeakably dear thou art to me! What hast thou conquered? how many reasons for resolve; how vast an army in the past has thy bright and tender purity overthrown! But thou,—no, never shalt *thou* repent!" And for several minutes the sole thought of the soliloquist was love. But, scarce consciously to himself, a spirit not, to all seeming, befitted to that bridal day,—vague, restless, impressed with the dark and fluttering shadow of coming change—had taken possession of his breast, and did not long yield the mastery to any brighter and more serene emotion.

"And why?" he said, as this spirit regained its empire over him, and he paused before the "starred tubes" of his beloved science—"and why this chill, this shiver, in the midst of hope? Can the mere breath of the seasons, the weight or lightness of the atmosphere, the outward gloom or smile of the brute mass called Nature, affect us thus? Out on this empty science, this vain knowledge, this little lore, if we are

so fooled by the vile clay and the common air from our one great empire—self! Great God! hast thou made us in mercy or in disdain? Placed in this narrow world,—darkness and cloud around us,—no fixed rule for men—creeds, morals, changing in every clime, and growing like herbs upon the mere soil,—we struggle to dispel the shadows; we grope around; from our own heart and our sharp and hard endurance we strike our only light,—for what? to show us what dupes we are! creatures of accident, tools of circumstance, blind instruments of the scorner Fate;—the very mind, the very reason, a bound slave to the desires, the weakness of the clay; affected by a cloud, dulled by the damps of the foul marsh;—stricken from power to weakness, from sense to madness, to gaping idiocy, or delirious raving, by a putrid exhalation!—a rheum, a chill, and Cæsar trembles! The world's gods, that slay or enlighten millions—poor puppets to the same rank imp which calls up the fungus or breeds the worm,—pah! How little worth is it in this life to be wise! Strange, strange how my heart sinks. Well, the better sign! the better sign! *in danger* it never sank.”

Absorbed in these reflections, Aram had not for some minutes noticed the sudden ceasing of the bell; but now, as he again paused from his irregular and abrupt pacings along the chamber, the silence struck him, and looking forth, and striving again to catch the note, he saw a little group of men, among whom he marked the erect and comely form of Rowland Lester, approaching towards the house.

“What!” he thought, “do they come for me? Is it so late? Have I played the laggard? Nay, it yet wants near an hour to the time they expected me. Well, some kindness,—some attention from my good father-in-law; I must thank him for it. What! my hand trembles; how weak are these poor nerves! I must rest, and recall my mind to itself.”

And, indeed, whether or not from the novelty and importance of the event he was about to celebrate, or from some presentiment, occasioned, as he would fain believe, by the mournful and sudden change in the atmosphere, an embarrassment, a wavering, a fear, very unwonted to the calm and stately self-possession of Eugene Aram, made itself painfully felt throughout his frame. He sank down in his chair, and strove to recollect himself; it was an effort in which he had just succeeded, when a loud knocking was heard at the outer door—it swung open—several voices were heard. Aram sprang up, pale, breathless, his lips apart.

“Great God!” he exclaimed, clasping his hands. “Murderer! was that the word I heard shouted forth? The voice, too, is Walter Lester’s. Has he returned?—can he have learned——?”

To rush to the door,—to throw across it a long, heavy iron bar, which would resist assaults of no common strength, was his first impulse. Thus enabled to gain time for reflection, his active and alarmed mind ran over the whole field of expedient and conjecture. Again, “Murderer!” “Stay me not,” cried Walter from below; “*my* hand shall seize the murderer!”

Guess was now over ; danger and death were marching on him. Escape,—how? whither? The height forbade the thought of flight from the casement! The door?—he heard loud steps already hurrying up the stairs. His hands clutched convulsively at his breast, where his firearms were generally concealed,—they were left below. He glanced one lightning glance round the room ; no weapon of any kind was at hand. His brain reeled for a moment, his breath gasped, a mortal sickness passed over his heart, and then the MIND triumphed over all. He drew up to his full height, folded his arms doggedly on his breast, and muttering—

“The accuser comes,—I have it still to refute the charge :”—he stood prepared to meet, nor despairing to evade, the worst.

As waters close over the object which divided them, all these thoughts, these fears, and this resolution, had been but the work, the agitation, and the succeeding calm of the moment ; that moment was past.

“Admit us!” cried the voice of Walter Lester, knocking fiercely at the door.

“Not so fervently, boy,” said Lester, laying his hand on his nephew’s shoulder ; “your tale is yet to be proved—I believe it not : treat him as innocent, I pray, I command, till you have shown him guilty.”

“Away, uncle!” said the fiery Walter ; “he is my father’s murderer. God hath given justice to my hands.” These words, uttered in a lower key than before, were but indistinctly heard by Aram through the massy door.

“Open, or we force our entrance !” shouted Walter again ; and Aram, speaking for the first time, replied in a clear and sonorous voice, so that an angel, had one spoken, could not have more deeply impressed the heart of Rowland Lester with a conviction of the student’s innocence,—

“Who knocks so rudely ? what means this violence ? I open my doors to my friends. Is it a friend who asks it ?”

“I ask it,” said Rowland Lester, in a trembling and agitated voice. “There seems some dreadful mistake : come forth, Eugene, and rectify it by a word.”

“Is it you, Rowland Lester ?—it is enough. I was but with my books, and had secured myself from intrusion. Enter.”

The bar was withdrawn, the door was burst open, and even Walter Lester—even the officers of justice with him—drew back for a moment as they beheld the lofty brow, the majestic presence, the features so unutterably calm, of Eugene Aram.

“What want you, sirs ?” said he, unmoved and unflinching, though in the officers of justice he recognised faces he had known before, and in that distant town in which all that he dreaded in the past lay treasured up. At the sound of his voice, the spell that for an instant had arrested the step of the avenging son melted away.

“Seize him !” he cried to the officers ; “you see your prisoner.”

“Hold !” cried Aram, drawing back ; “by what authority is this outrage ? for what am I arrested ?”

“Behold,” said Walter, speaking through his teeth — “behold our warrant ! You are accused of murder ! Know you the name of Richard Houseman ? Pause—consider ; or that of Daniel Clarke ?”

Slowly Aram lifted his eyes from the warrant, and it might be seen that his face was a shade more pale, though his look did not quail, or his nerves tremble. Slowly he turned his gaze upon Walter, and then, after one moment’s survey, dropped it once more on the paper.

“The name of Houseman is not unfamiliar to me,” said he, calmly, but with effort.

“And knew you Daniel Clarke ?”

“What mean these questions ?” said Aram, losing temper, and stamping violently on the ground ; “is it thus that a man, free and guiltless, is to be questioned, at the behest, or rather outrage, of every lawless boy ? Lead me to some authority meet for me to answer ;—for you, boy, my answer is contempt.”

“Big words shall not save thee, murderer !” cried Walter, breaking from his uncle, who in vain endeavoured to hold him, and laying his powerful grasp upon Aram’s shoulder. Livid was the glare that shot from the student’s eye upon his assailer ; and so fearfully did his features work and change with the passions within him, that even Walter felt a strange shudder thrill through his frame.

“Gentlemen,” said Aram, at last, mastering his emotions, and resuming some portion of the remarkable dignity that characterised his usual bearing, as he turned towards the officers of justice,—“I call upon you to

discharge your duty : if this be a rightful warrant, I am *your* prisoner, but I am not *this* man's. I command your protection from him !”

Walter had already released his gripe, and said, in a muttered voice,—

“My passion misled me ; violence is unworthy my solemn cause. God and Justice—not these hands—are my avengers.”

“*Your* avengers !” said Aram ; “what dark words are these ? This warrant accuses me of the murder of one Daniel Clarke : what is he to thee ?”

“Mark me, man !” said Walter, fixing his eyes on Aram's countenance. “The name of Daniel Clarke was a feigned name ; the real name was Geoffrey Lester : that murdered Lester was my father, and the brother of him whose daughter, had I not come to-day, you would have called your wife !”

Aram felt, while these words were uttered, that the eyes of all in the room were on him ; and perhaps that knowledge enabled him not to reveal by outward sign what must have passed within during the awful trial of that moment.

“It is a dreadful tale,” he said, “if true ; dreadful to me, so nearly allied to that family. But as yet I grapple with shadows.”

“What ! does not your conscience now convict you ?” cried Walter, staggered by the calmness of the prisoner. But here Lester, who could no longer contain himself, interposed : he put by his nephew, and rushing to Aram, fell, weeping, upon his neck.

“I do not accuse thee, Eugene—my son, my son! I feel—I know thou art innocent of this monstrous crime: some horrid delusion darkens that poor boy’s sight. You—you—who would walk aside to save a worm!” and the poor old man, overcome with his emotions, could literally say no more.

Aram looked down on Lester with a compassionate expression, and soothing him with kind words, and promises that all would be explained, gently moved from his hold, and, anxious to terminate the scene, silently motioned the officers to proceed. Struck with the calmness and dignity of his manner, and fully impressed by it with the notion of his innocence, the officers treated him with a marked respect: they did not even walk by his side, but suffered him to follow their steps. As they descended the stairs, Aram turned round to Walter, with a bitter and reproachful countenance,—

“And so, young man, your malice against me has reached even to this! Will nothing but my life content you?”

“Is the desire of execution on my father’s murderer but the wish of malice?” retorted Walter; though his heart yet wellnigh misgave him as to the grounds on which his suspicion rested.

Aram smiled, as half in scorn, half through incredulity, and, shaking his head gently, moved on without further words.

The three old women, who had remained in listening astonishment at the foot of the stairs, gave way as the

men descended ; but the one who so long had been Aram's solitary domestic, and who, from her deafness, was still benighted and uncomprehending as to the causes of his seizure, though from that very reason her alarm was the greater and more acute,—she, impatiently thrusting away the officers, and mumbling some unintelligible anathema as she did so, flung herself at the feet of a master whose quiet habits and constant kindness had endeared him to her humble and faithful heart, and exclaimed,—

“What are they doing? Have they the heart to ill-use you? O master, God bless you! God shield you! I shall never see you who was my only friend—who was every one's friend—any more!”

Aram drew himself from her, and said, with a quivering lip, to Rowland Lester,—

“If her fears are true—if—if I never more return hither, see that her old age does not starve—does not want.”

Lester could not speak for sobbing, but the request was remembered. And now Aram, turning aside his proud head to conceal his emotion, beheld open the door of the room so trimly prepared for Madeline's reception; the flowers smiled upon him from their stands. “Lead on, gentlemen,” he said, quickly. And so Eugene Aram passed his threshold!

“Ho, ho!” muttered the old hag, whose predictions in the morning had been so ominous—“Ho, ho! you'll believe Goody Darkmans another time! Providence respects the sayings of the ould. 'Twas not

for nothing the rats grinned at me last night. But let's in and have a warm glass. He, he! there will be all the strong liquors for us now; the Lord is merciful to the poor!"

As the little group proceeded through the valley—the officers first, Aram and Lester side by side, Walter, with his hand on his pistol and his eye on the prisoner, a little behind—Lester endeavoured to cheer the prisoner's spirits and his own by insisting on the madness of the charge, and the certainty of instant acquittal from the magistrate to whom they were bound, and who was esteemed the one both most acute and most just in the county. Aram interrupted him somewhat abruptly—

"My friend, enough of this presently. But Madeline—what knows she as yet?"

"Nothing: of course, we kept——"

"Exactly—exactly: you have done wisely. Why need she learn anything as yet? Say an arrest for debt—a mistake—an absence but of a day or so at most;—you understand?"

"Yes. Will you not see her, Eugene, before you go, and say this yourself?"

"I!—O God!—I! to whom this day was—— No, no; save me, I implore you, from the agony of such a contrast—an interview so mournful and unavailing. No, we must not meet! But whither go we now? Not—not, surely, through all the idle gossips of the village—the crowd already excited to gape, and stare, and speculate on the——"

“No,” interrupted Lester, “the carriages await at the farther end of the valley. I thought of that—for the rash boy seems to have changed his nature. I loved—Heaven knows how I loved my brother!—but before I would let suspicion thus blind reason, I would suffer inquiry to sleep for ever on his fate.”

“Your nephew,” said Aram, “has ever wronged me. But waste not words on him: let us think only of Madeline. Will you go back at once to her, tell her a tale to lull her apprehensions, and then follow us with haste? I am alone among enemies till you come.”

Lester was about to answer, when, at a turn in the road which brought the carriages within view, they perceived two figures in white hastening towards them: and ere Aram was prepared for the surprise, Madeline had sunk, pale, trembling, and all breathless, on his breast.

“I could not keep her back,” said Ellinor, apologetically, to her father.

“Back! and why? Am I not in my proper place?” cried Madeline, lifting her face from Aram’s breast; and then, as her eyes circled the group, and rested on Aram’s countenance, now no longer calm, but full of woe—of passion—of disappointed love—of anticipated despair—she rose, and, gradually recoiling with a fear which struck dumb her voice, thrice attempted to speak, and thrice failed.

“But what—what is—what means this?” exclaimed Ellinor. “Why do you weep, father? Why does

Eugene turn away his face? You answer not. Speak, for God's sake! These strangers—what are they? And you, Walter, you—why are you so pale? Why do you thus knit your brows and fold your arms? You—*you* will tell me the meaning of this dreadful silence—this scene! Speak, cousin—dear cousin, speak!”

“Speak!” cried Madeline, finding voice at length, but in the sharp and straining tone of wild terror, in which they recognised no note of the natural music. That single word sounded rather as a shriek than an adjuration; and so piercingly it ran through the hearts of all present that the very officers, hardened as their trade had made them, felt as if they would rather have faced death than answered that command.

A dead, long, dreary pause, and Aram broke it. “Madeline Lester,” said he, “prove yourself worthy of the hour of trial. Exert yourself; arouse your heart; be prepared! You are the betrothed of one whose soul never quailed before man's angry word. Remember that, and fear not!”

“I will not—I will not, Eugene! Speak—only speak!”

“You have loved me in good report; trust me now in ill. They accuse me of crime—a heinous crime! At first I would not have told you the real charge; pardon me, I wronged you: now, know all! They accuse me, I say, of crime. Of what crime? you ask. Ay, I scarce know, so vague is the charge—so fierce the accuser: but prepare, Madeline—it is of murder!”

Raised as her spirits had been by the haughty and earnest tone of Aram's exhortation, Madeline now, though she turned deadly pale—though the earth swam round and round—yet repressed the shriek upon her lips, as those horrid words shot into her soul.

“You!—murder!—you! And who dares accuse you?”

“Behold him—your cousin!”

Ellinor heard, turned, fixed her eyes on Walter's sullen brow and motionless attitude, and fell senseless to the earth. Not thus Madeline. As there is an exhaustion that forbids, not invites repose, so, when the mind is thoroughly on the rack, the common relief to anguish is not allowed; the senses are too sharply strung thus happily to collapse into forgetfulness; the dreadful inspiration that agony kindles supports nature while it consumes it. Madeline passed, without a downward glance, by the lifeless body of her sister; and walking with a steady step to Walter, she laid her hand upon his arm, and fixing on his countenance that soft, clear eye, which was now lit with a searching and preternatural glare, and seemed to pierce into his soul, she said—

“Walter! do I hear aright? Am I awake? Is it you who accuse Eugene Aram?—your Madeline's betrothed husband—Madeline, whom you once loved? Of what?—of crimes which death alone can punish. Away!—it is not you—I know it is not. Say that I am mistaken—that I am mad, if you will. Come,

Walter, relieve me : let me not abhor the very air you breathe !”

“ Will no one have mercy on me ? ” cried Walter, rent to the heart, and covering his face with his hands. In the fire and heat of vengeance he had not recked of this. He had only thought of justice to a father—punishment to a villain—rescue for a credulous girl. The woe—the horror he was about to inflict on all he most loved—*this* had not struck upon him with a due force till now !

“ Mercy—*you* talk of mercy ! I knew it could not be true ! ” said Madeline, trying to pluck her cousin’s hand from his face : “ you could not have dreamed of wrong to Eugene—and—and upon this day. Say we have erred, or that you have erred, and we will forgive and bless you even now ! ”

Aram had not interfered in this scene. He kept his eyes fixed on the cousins, not uninterested to see what effect Madeline’s touching words might produce on his accuser : meanwhile she continued—“ Speak to me, Walter—dear Walter, speak to me ! Are you, my cousin, my playfellow—are you the one to blight our hopes—to dash our joys—to bring dread and terror into a home so lately all peace and sunshine—your own home—your childhood’s home ? What have you done ? what have you dared to do ? Accuse *him* !—of what ? Murder ! speak, speak. Murder, ha ! ha !—murder ! nay, not so !—you would not venture to come here—you would not let me take your hand—you would not look us, your uncle, your more than

sisters, in the face, if you could nurse in your heart this lie—this black, horrid lie !”

Walter withdrew his hands, and, as he turned his face, said—

“ Let him prove his innocence—pray God he do ! I am not his accuser, Madeline. His accusers are the bones of my dead father ! Save these, Heaven alone and the revealing earth are witnesses against him !”

“ Your father !” said Madeline, staggering back—“ my lost uncle ! Nay—now I know, indeed, what a shadow has appalled us all ! Did you know my uncle, Eugene ? Did you ever see Geoffrey Lester ?”

“ Never, as I believe, so help me God !” said Aram, laying his hand on his heart. “ But this is idle now,” as, recollecting himself, he felt that the case had gone forth from Walter’s hands, and that appeal to him had become vain.

“ Leave us now, dearest Madeline ; my beloved wife that shall be, that is !—I go to disprove these charges—perhaps I shall return to-night. Delay not my acquittal, even from doubt—a boy’s doubt. Come, sirs.”

“ O Eugene, Eugene !” cried Madeline, throwing herself on her knees before him—“ do not order me to leave you now—now, in the hour of dread—I will not. Nay, look not so ! I swear I will not ! Father, dear father, come and plead for me—say I shall go with you. I ask nothing more. Do not fear for my nerves—cowardice is gone. I will not shame you—I will not play the woman. I know what is due to one

who loves *him*—try me, only try me. You weep, father, you shake your head. But you, Eugene—you have not the heart to deny me. Think—think, if I stayed here to count the moments till your return, my very senses would leave me. What do I ask?—but to go with you, to be the first to hail your triumph! Had this happened two hours hence you could not have said me nay—I should have claimed the right to be with you; I now but implore the blessing. You relent—you relent—I see it!”

“O Heaven!” exclaimed Aram, rising, and clasping her to his breast, and wildly kissing her face, but with cold and trembling lips—“this is, indeed, a bitter hour; let me not sink beneath it. Yes, Madeline, ask your father if he consents; I hail your strengthening presence as that of an angel. I will not be the one to sever you from my side.”

“You are right, Eugene,” said Lester, who was supporting Ellinor, not yet recovered—“let her go with us; it is but common kindness and common mercy.”

Madeline uttered a cry of joy (joy even at such a moment!), and clung fast to Eugene’s arm, as if for assurance that they were not indeed to be separated.

By this time some of Lester’s servants, who had from a distance followed their young mistresses, reached the spot. To their care Lester gave the still scarce reviving Ellinor; and then, turning round with a severe countenance to Walter, said, “Come, sir, your rashness has done sufficient wrong for the present: come

now, and see how soon your suspicions will end in shame."

"Justice, and blood for blood!" said Walter, sternly ; but his heart felt as if it were broken. His venerable uncle's tears—Madeline's look of horror as she turned from him—Ellinor, all lifeless, and he not daring to approach her—this was *his* work! He pulled his hat over his eyes, and hastened into the carriage alone. Lester, Madeline, and Aram followed in the other vehicle ; and the two officers contented themselves with mounting the box, certain that the prisoner would attempt no escape.

CHAPTER III.

The Justice.—The Departure.—The Equanimity of the Corporal in bearing the Misfortunes of other People.—The Examination.—Its result.—Aram's Conduct in Prison.—The Elasticity of our human Nature.—A Visit from the Earl.—Walter's Determination.—Madeline.

Bear me to prison, where I am committed.—*Measure for Measure.*

ON arriving at Sir ——'s, a disappointment, for which, had they previously conversed with the officers, they might have been prepared, awaited them. The fact was, that the justice had only endorsed the warrant sent from Yorkshire ; and after a very short colloquy, in which he expressed his regret at the circumstance, his conviction that the charge would be disproved, and a few other courteous commonplaces, he gave Aram to understand that the matter now did not rest with him, but that it was to Yorkshire that the officers were bound, and before Mr Thornton, a magistrate of that county, that the examination was to take place. " All I can do," said the magistrate, " I have already done ; but I wished for an opportunity of informing you of it. I have written to my brother justice at full length respecting your high character, and treating the habits

and rectitude of your life alone as a sufficient refutation of so monstrous a charge."

For the first time a visible embarrassment came over the firm nerves of the prisoner: he seemed to look with great uneasiness at the prospect of this long and dreary journey, and for such an end. Perhaps the very notion of returning as a suspected criminal to that part of the country where a portion of his youth had been passed, was sufficient to disquiet and deject him. All this while his poor Madeline seemed actuated by a spirit beyond herself; she would not be separated from his side—she held his hand in hers—she whispered comfort and courage at the very moment when her own heart most sank. The magistrate wiped his eyes when he saw a creature so young, so beautiful, in circumstances so fearful, and bearing up with an energy so little to be expected from her years and delicate appearance. Aram said but little; he covered his face with his right hand for a few moments, as if to hide a passing emotion, a sudden weakness. When he removed it, all vestige of colour had died away; his face was pale as that of one who had risen from the grave; but it was settled and composed.

"It is a hard pang, sir," said he, with a faint smile; "so many miles—so many days—so long a deferment of knowing the best, or preparing to meet the worst. But, be it so! I thank you, sir—I thank you all—Lester, Madeline, for your kindness; you two must now leave me: the brand is on my name—the suspected man is no fit object for love or friendship. Farewell!"

“We go with you!” said Madeline, firmly, and in a very low voice.

Aram’s eyes sparkled, but he waved his hand impatiently.

“We go with you, my friend!” repeated Lester.

And so, indeed, not to dwell long on a painful scene, it was finally settled. Lester and his two daughters that evening followed Aram to the dark and fatal bourne to which he was bound.

It was in vain that Walter, seizing his uncle’s hands, whispered—

“For Heaven’s sake, do not be rash in your friendship! You have not yet learned all. I tell you, that there can be no doubt of his guilt! Remember, it is a brother for whom you mourn! will you countenance his murderer?”

Lester, despite himself, was struck by the earnestness with which his nephew spoke, but the impression died away as the words ceased: so strong and deep had been the fascination which Eugene Aram had exercised over the hearts of all once drawn within the near circle of his attraction, that, had the charge of murder been made against himself, Lester could not have repelled it with a more entire conviction of the innocence of the accused. Still, however, the deep sincerity of his nephew’s manner in some measure served to soften his resentment towards him.

“No, no, boy!” said he, drawing away his hand; “Rowland Lester is not the one to desert a friend in the day of darkness and the hour of need. Be silent,

I say!—My brother, my poor brother, you tell me, has been murdered. I will see justice done to him: but Aram! Fie! fie! it is a name that would whisper falsehood to the loudest accusation. Go, Walter, go! I do not blame you!—you may be right—a murdered father is a dread and awful memory to a son! What wonder that the thought warps your judgment? But go! Eugene was to me both a guide and a blessing; a father in wisdom, a son in love. I cannot look on his accuser's face without anguish. Go! we shall meet again.—How! Go!”

“Enough, sir!” said Walter, partly in anger, partly in sorrow;—“Time be the judge between us all!”

With those words he turned from the house, and proceeded on foot towards a cottage half-way between Grassdale and the magistrate's house, at which, previous to his return to the former place, he had prudently left the corporal—not willing to trust to that person's discretion, as to the tales and scandal that he might propagate throughout the village, on a matter so painful and so dark.

Let the world wag as it will, there are some tempers which its vicissitudes never reach. Nothing makes a picture of distress more sad than the portrait of some individual sitting indifferently looking on in the background. This was a secret Hogarth knew well. Mark his death-bed scenes:—Poverty and Vice worked up into horror, and the physicians in the corner wrangling for the fee!—or the child playing with the coffin—or the nurse filching what fortune, harsh, yet less harsh than

humanity, might have left. In the melancholy depth of humour that steeps both our fancy and our heart in the immortal romance of Cervantes (for how profoundly melancholy is it to be compelled by one gallant folly to laugh at all that is gentle, and brave, and wise, and generous !) nothing grates on us more than when—last scene of all—the poor knight lies dead, his exploits for ever over—for ever dumb his eloquent discourses—than when, I say, we are told that, despite of his grief, even little Sancho did not eat or drink the less :—these touches open to us the real world, it is true ; but it is not the best part of it. Certain it was, that when Walter, full of contending emotions at all he had witnessed—harassed, tortured, yet also elevated, by his feelings—stopped opposite the cottage door, and saw there the corporal sitting comfortably in the porch, his *vile modicum Sabini* before him, his pipe in his mouth, and a complacent expression of satisfaction diffusing itself over features which shrewdness and selfishness had marked for their own ;—certain it was that at this sight Walter experienced a more displeasing revulsion of feeling—a more entire conviction of sadness—a more consummate disgust of this weary world and the motley masquers that walk therein, than all the tragic scenes he had just witnessed had produced within him.

“And well, sir,” said the corporal, slowly rising, “how did it go off?—wasn’t the villain bash’d to the dust—you’ve nabbed him safe, I hope?”

“Silence !” said Walter, sternly ; “prepare for our

departure. The chaise will be here forthwith ; we return to Yorkshire this day. Ask me no more now."

"A—well—baugh !" said the corporal.

There was a long silence. Walter walked to and fro the road before the cottage. The chaise arrived ; the luggage was put in. Walter's foot was on the step, but before the corporal mounted the rumbling dickey, that invaluable domestic hemmed thrice.

"And had you time, sir, to think of poor Jacob, and slip in a word to your uncle about the bit tator-ground?"

We pass over the space of time, short in fact, long in suffering, that elapsed, till the prisoner and his companions reached Knaresborough. Aram's conduct during this time was not only calm, but cheerful. The stoical doctrines he had affected through life, he on this trying interval called into remarkable exertion. He it was who now supported the spirits of his mistress and his friend ; and though he no longer pretended to be sanguine of acquittal—though again and again he urged upon them the gloomy fact—first, how improbable it was that this course had been entered into against him without strong presumption of guilt ; and, secondly, how little less improbable it was, that at that distance of time he should be able to procure evidence, or remember circumstances, sufficient on the instant to set aside such presumption—he yet dwelt partly on the hope of *ultimate* proof of his innocence, and still more strongly on the firmness of his own mind to bear, without shrinking, even the hardest fate.

“Do not,” he said to Lester—“do not look on these trials of life only with the eyes of the world. Reflect how poor and minute a segment, in the vast circle of eternity, existence is at the best. Its sorrow and its shame are but moments. Always in my brightest and youngest hours I have wrapped my heart in the contemplation of an august futurity:—

‘The soul, secure in its existence, smiles
At the drawn dagger, and defies its point.’

Were it not for Madeline’s dear sake, I should long since have been over-weary of the world. As it is, the sooner, even by a violent and unjust fate, we leave a path begirt with snares below and tempests above, the happier for that soul which looks to its lot in this earth as the least part of its appointed doom.”

In discourses like this, which the nature of his eloquence was peculiarly calculated to render solemn and impressive, Aram strove to prepare his friends for the worst, and perhaps to cheat, or to steel, himself. Ever as he spoke thus, Lester or Ellinor broke on him with impatient remonstrance; but Madeline, as if imbued with a deeper and more mournful penetration into the future, listened in tearless and breathless attention. She gazed upon him with a look that shared the thought he expressed, though it read not (yet she dreamed so) the heart from which it came. In the words of that beautiful poet, to whose true nature, so full of unuttered tenderness — so fraught with the

rich nobility of love — we have begun slowly to awaken—

“ *Her lip was silent, scarcely beat her heart,
Her eye alone proclaimed, ‘ We will not part !’
Thy ‘ hope’ may perish, or thy friends may flee,
Farewell to life—but not adieu to thee !” **

They arrived at noon at the house of Mr Thornton, and Aram underwent his examination. Though he denied most of the particulars in Houseman’s evidence, and expressly the charge of murder, his commitment was made out ; and that day he was removed by the officers (Barker and Moor, who had arrested him at Grassdale) to York Castle, to await his trial at the assizes.

The sensation which this extraordinary event created throughout the county was wholly unequalled. Not only in Yorkshire, and the county in which he had of late resided, where his personal habits were known, but even in the metropolis, and amongst men of all classes in England, it appears to have caused one mingled feeling of astonishment, horror, and incredulity, which in our times has had no parallel in any criminal prosecution. The peculiar attributes of the prisoner—his genius—his learning—his moral life—the interest that by students had been for years attached to his name—his approaching marriage—the length of time that had elapsed since the crime had been committed—the singular and abrupt manner, the wild and legendary spot,

* *Lara.*

in which the skeleton of the lost man had been discovered—the imperfect rumours—the dark and suspicious evidence—all combined to make a tale of such marvellous incident, and breeding such endless conjecture, that we cannot wonder to find it afterwards received a place, not only in the temporary chronicles, but even in the permanent histories of the period.

Previous to Walter's departure from Knaresborough to Grassdale, and immediately subsequent to the discovery at St Robert's Cave, the coroner's inquest had been held upon the bones so mysteriously and suddenly brought to light. Upon the witness of the old woman at whose house Aram had lodged, and upon that of Houseman, aided by some circumstantial and less weighty evidence, had been issued that warrant on which we have seen the prisoner apprehended.

With most men there was an intimate and indignant persuasion of Aram's innocence; and at this day, in the county where he last resided, there still lingers the same belief. Firm as his Gospel faith that conviction rested in the mind of the worthy Lester; and he sought, by every means he could devise, to soothe and cheer the confinement of his friend. In prison, however (indeed after his examination—after Aram had made himself thoroughly acquainted with all the circumstantial evidence which identified Clarke with Geoffrey Lester—a story that till then he had persuaded himself wholly to disbelieve), a change which, in the presence of Madeline or her father, he vainly attempted wholly to conceal, and to which, when alone,

he surrendered himself with a gloomy abstraction, came over his mood, and dashed him from the lofty height of philosophy from which he had before looked down on the peril and the ills below.

Sometimes he would gaze on Lester with a strange and glassy eye, and mutter inaudibly to himself, as if unaware of the old man's presence; at others, he would shrink from Lester's proffered hand, and start abruptly from his professions of unaltered, unalterable regard; sometimes he would sit silently, and, with a changeless and stony countenance, look upon Madeline as she now spoke in that exalted tone of consolation which had passed away from himself; and when she had done, instead of replying to her speech, he would say, abruptly—"Ay, at the worst you love me, then—love me better than any one on earth—say that, Madeline, again say that!"

And Madeline's trembling lips obeyed the demand.

"Yes," he would renew, "this man, whom they accuse me of murdering, this—your uncle—him you never saw since you were an infant, a mere infant; *him* you could not love! What was he to you?—yet it is dreadful to think of—dreadful, dreadful!" and then again his voice ceased; but his lips moved convulsively, and his eyes seemed to speak meanings that defied words. These alterations in his bearing, which belied his steady and resolute character, astonished and dejected both Madeline and her father. Sometimes they thought that his situation had shaken his reason, or that the horrible suspicion of having murdered the

uncle of his intended wife made him look upon themselves with a secret shudder, and that they were mingled up in his mind, by no unnatural though unjust confusion, with the causes of his present awful and uncertain state. With the generality of the world, these two tender friends believed Houseman the sole and real murderer, and fancied his charge against Aram was but the last expedient of a villain to ward punishment from himself by imputing crime to another. Naturally, then, they frequently sought to turn the conversation upon Houseman, and on the different circumstances that had brought him acquainted with Aram : but on this ground the prisoner seemed morbidly sensitive, and averse to detailed discussion. His narration, however, such as it was, threw much light upon certain matters on which Madeline and Lester were before anxious and inquisitive.

“Houseman is, in all ways,” said he, with great and bitter vehemence, “unredeemed, and beyond the calculations of an ordinary wickedness ; we knew each other from our relationship, but seldom met, and still more rarely held long intercourse together. After we separated, when I left Knaresborough, we did not meet for years. He sought me at Grassdale ; he was poor, and implored assistance ; I gave him all within my power ; he sought me again—nay, more than once again—and finding me justly averse to yielding to his extortionate demands, he then broached the purpose he has now effected ; he threatened—you hear me—you understand—he threatened me with this charge—the murder

of Daniel Clarke ; by that name alone I knew the deceased. The menace, and the known villany of the man, agitated me beyond expression. What was I?—a being who lived without the world—who knew not its ways—who desired only rest ! The menace haunted me—almost maddened ! Your nephew has told you, you say, of broken words, of escaping emotions, which he has noted, even to suspicion, in me ; you now behold the cause ! Was it not sufficient ? My life, nay more, my fame, my marriage, Madeline's peace of mind, all depended on the uncertain fury or craft of a wretch like this ! The idea was with me night and day : to avoid it, I resolved on a sacrifice ; you may blame me, I was weak, yet I thought then not unwise ; to avoid it, I say, I offered to bribe this man to leave the country. I sold my pittance to oblige him to it. I bound him thereto by the strongest ties. Nay, so disinterestedly, so truly did I love Madeline, that I would not wed while I thought this danger could burst upon me. I believed that, before my marriage-day, Houseman had left the country. It was not so : Fate ordered otherwise. It seems that Houseman came to Knaresborough to see his daughter ; that suspicion, by a sudden train of events, fell on him—perhaps justly ; to screen himself he has sacrificed me. The tale seems plausible ; perhaps the accuser may triumph. But, Madeline, you now may account for much that may have perplexed you before. Let me remember—ay, ay—I have dropped mysterious words—have I not ?—have I not ?—owning that danger was around me—owning that a wild

and terrific secret was heavy at my breast ; nay, once, walking with you the evening before—before the fatal day, I said that we must prepare to seek some yet more secluded spot, some deeper retirement ; for despite my precautions, despite the supposed absence of Houseman from the country itself, a fevered and restless presentiment would at some times intrude itself on me. All this is now accounted for, is it not, Madeline ? Speak, speak !”

“ All, love, all ! Why do you look on me with that searching eye, that frowning brow ? ”

“ Did I ? No, no, I have no frown for you ; but peace, I am not what I ought to be through this ordeal.”

The above narration of Aram's did indeed account to Madeline for much that had till then remained unexplained ; the appearance of Houseman at Grassdale—the meeting between him and Aram on the evening she walked with the latter, and questioned him of his ill-boding visitor ; the frequent abstraction and muttered hints of her lover ; and, as he had said, his last declaration of the possible necessity of leaving Grassdale. Nor was it improbable, though it was rather in accordance with the unworldly habits than with the haughty character of Aram, that he should seek, circumstanced as he was, to silence even the false accuser of a plausible tale, that might well strike horror and bewilderment into a man much more, to all seeming, fitted to grapple with the hard and coarse realities of life than the moody and secluded scholar. Be that as it may, though Lester

deplored, he did not blame that circumstance, which, after all, had not transpired, nor seemed likely to transpire ; and he attributed the prisoner's aversion to enter farther on the matter to the natural dislike of so proud a man to refer to his own weakness ; and to dwell upon the manner in which, in spite of that weakness, he had been duped. This story Lester retailed to Walter, and it contributed to throw a damp and uncertainty over those mixed and unquiet feelings with which the latter waited for the coming trial. There were many moments when the young man was tempted to regret that Aram had not escaped a trial which, if he were proved guilty, would for ever blast the happiness of his family ; and which might, notwithstanding such a verdict, leave on Walter's own mind an impression of the prisoner's innocence ; and an uneasy consciousness that he, through his investigations, had brought him to that doom.

Walter remained in Yorkshire, seeing little of his family—of none indeed but Lester ; it was not to be expected that Madeline would see him, and once only he caught the tearful eyes of Ellinor as she retreated from the room he entered, and those eyes beamed kindness and pity, but something also of reproach.

Time passed slowly and witheringly on : a man of the name of Terry having been included in the suspicion, and indeed committed, it appeared that the prosecutor could not procure witnesses by the customary time, and the trial was postponed till the next assizes. As this man was, however, never brought up to trial, and appears no more, we have said nothing of him in our narrative,

until he thus became the instrument of a delay in the fate of Eugene Aram. Time passed on—winter, spring, were gone, and the glory and gloss of summer were now lavished over the happy earth. In some measure the usual calmness of his demeanour had returned to Aram; he had mastered those moody fits we have referred to, which had so afflicted his affectionate visitors; and he now seemed to prepare and buoy himself up against that awful ordeal of life and death which he was about soon to pass. Yet he—the hermit of Nature, who

“ Each little herb
That grows on mountain bleak, or tangled forest,
Had learned to name” *—

he could not feel, even through the bars and checks of a prison, the soft summer air, “the witchery of the soft blue sky;” he could not see the leaves bud forth, and mellow into their darker verdure; he could not hear the songs of the many-voiced birds, or listen to the dancing rain, calling up beauty where it fell; or mark at night, through his high and narrow casement, the stars aloof, and the sweet moon pouring in her light, like God’s pardon, even through the dungeon-gloom and the desolate scenes where Mortality struggles with Despair; he could not catch, obstructed as they were, these, the benigner influences of earth, and not sicken and pant for his old and full communion with their ministry and presence. Sometimes all around him was forgotten—the harsh cell, the cheerless solitude, the approaching trial, the boding fear, the darkened hope,

* “Remorse,” by S. T. COLERIDGE.

even the spectre of a troubled and fierce remembrance—all was forgotten, and his spirit was abroad, and his step upon the mountain-top once more.

In our estimate of the ills of life we never sufficiently take into our consideration the wonderful elasticity of our moral frame, the unlooked-for, the startling facility with which the human mind accommodates itself to all change of circumstance, making an object, and even a joy, from the hardest and seemingly the least redeemed conditions of fate. The man who watched the spider in his cell may have taken, at least, as much interest in the watch, as when engaged in the most ardent and ambitious objects of his former life. Let any man look over his past career, let him recall not *moments*, not *hours* of agony, for to them Custom lends not her blessed magic ; but let him single out some *lengthened* period of physical or moral endurance : in hastily reverting to it, it may seem at first, I grant, altogether wretched ; a series of days marked with the black stone—the clouds without a star : but let him look more closely, it was not so during the time of suffering ; a thousand little things, in the bustle of life dormant and unheeded, *then* started forth into notice, and became to him objects of interest or diversion ; the dreary present, once made familiar, glided away from him, not less than if it had been all happiness ; his mind dwelt not on the dull intervals, but the stepping-stone it had created and placed at each ; and by that moral dreaming which for ever goes on within man's secret heart, he lived as little in the immediate world before him, as in the most

sanguine period of his youth, or the most scheming of his maturity.

So wonderful in equalising all states and all times in the varying tide of life are these two rulers, yet levellers, of mankind, Hope and Custom, that the very idea of an eternal punishment includes that of an utter alteration of the whole mechanism of the soul in its human state ; and no effort of an imagination, assisted by past experience, can conceive a state of torture which Custom can *never* blunt, and from which the chainless and immaterial spirit can *never* be beguiled into even a momentary escape.

Among the very few persons admitted to Aram's solitude was Lord ——. That nobleman was staying, on a visit, with a relation of his in the neighbourhood, and he seized, with an excited and mournful avidity, the opportunity thus afforded him of seeing once more a character that had so often forced itself on his speculation and surprise. He came to offer, not condolence, but respect ; *services*, at such a moment, no individual could render :—he gave, however, what was within his power—advice—and pointed out to Aram the best counsel to engage, and the best method of previous inquiry into particulars yet unexplored. He was astonished to find Aram indifferent on these points, so important. The prisoner, it would seem, had even then resolved on being his own counsel, and conducting his own cause ; the event proved that he did not rely in vain on the power of his own eloquence and sagacity, though he might on their result. As to the rest, he

spoke with impatience, and the petulance of a wronged man. "For the idle rumours of the world, I do not care," said he; "let them condemn or acquit me as they will: for my life, I might be willing, indeed, that it were spared—I trust it may be; if not, I can stand face to face with Death. I have now looked on him within these walls long enough to have grown familiar with his terrors. But enough of me. Tell me, my lord, something of the world without: I have grown eager about it at last. I have been now so condemned to feed upon myself, that I have become surfeited with the diet;" and it was with great difficulty that the earl drew Aram back to speak of himself: he did so, even when compelled to it, with so much qualification and reserve, mixed with some evident anger at the thought of being sifted and examined, that his visitor was forced finally to drop the subject; and not liking, indeed not able, at such a time, to converse on more indifferent themes, the last interview he ever had with Aram terminated much more abruptly than he had meant it. His opinion of the prisoner was not, however, shaken in the least. I have seen a letter of his to a celebrated personage of the day, in which, mentioning this interview, he concludes with saying:—"In short, there is so much real dignity about the man, that adverse circumstances increase it tenfold. Of his innocence I have not the remotest doubt; but if he persist in being his own counsel, I tremble for the result: you know, in such cases, how much more valuable is practice than

genius. But the judge, you will say, is, in criminal causes, the prisoner's counsel ; God grant he may prove a successful one ! I repeat, were Aram condemned by five hundred juries, I could not believe him guilty. No, the very essence of all human probabilities is against it."

The earl afterwards saw and conversed with Walter. He was much struck with the conduct of the young Lester, and much impressed with compassion for a situation so harassing and unhappy.

"Whatever be the result of the trial," said Walter, "I shall leave the country the moment it is finally over. If the prisoner be condemned, there is no hearth for me in my uncle's home : if not, my suspicions may still remain, and the sight of each other be an equal bane to the accused and to myself. A voluntary exile, and a life that may lead to forgetfulness, are all that I covet. I now find in my own person," he added, with a faint smile, "how deeply Shakespeare had read the mysteries of men's conduct. Hamlet, we are told, was naturally full of fire and action. One dark discovery quells his spirit, unstrings his heart, and stales to him for ever the uses of the world. I now comprehend the change. It is bodied forth even in the humblest individual, who is met by a similar fate—even in myself."

"Ay," said the earl, "I do indeed remember you a wild, impetuous, headstrong youth. I scarcely recognise your very appearance. The elastic spring has left your step—there seems a fixed furrow in your brow. These clouds of life are indeed no summer vapour, darkening

one moment and gone the next. But, my young friend, let us hope the best. I firmly believe in Aram's innocence—firmly!—more rootedly than I can express. The real criminal will appear on the trial. All bitterness between you and Aram must cease at his acquittal: you will be anxious to repair to him the injustice of a natural suspicion: and he seems not one who could long retain malice. All will be well, believe me.”

“God grant it!” said Walter, sighing deeply.

“But at the worst,” continued the earl, pressing his hand in parting, “if you should persist in your resolution to leave the country, write to me, and I can furnish you with an honourable and stirring occasion for doing so. Farewell!”

While time was thus advancing towards the fatal day, it was gravating deep ravages within the pure breast of Madeline Lester. She had borne up, as we have seen, for some time, against the sudden blow that had shivered her young hopes, and separated her by so awful a chasm from the side of Aram: but as week after week, month after month rolled on, and he still lay in prison, and the horrible suspense of ignominy and death still hung over her, then gradually her courage began to fail and her heart to sink. Of all the conditions to which the heart is subject, suspense is the one that most gnaws and cankers into the frame. One little month of that suspense, when it involves death, we are told, in a very remarkable work lately published by an eyewitness,* is sufficient to plough fixed lines

* See MR WAKEFIELD'S work, *On the Punishment of Death.*

and furrows in the face of a convict of five-and-twenty—sufficient to dash the brown hair with grey, and to bleach the grey to white. And this suspense—suspense of this nature—for more than eight whole months, had Madeline to endure !

About the end of the second month, the effect upon her health grew visible. Her colour, naturally delicate as the hues of the pink shell or the youngest rose, faded into one marble whiteness, which again, as time proceeded, flushed into that red and preternatural hectic, which, once settled, rarely yields its place but to the colours of the grave. Her form shrank from its rounded and noble proportions. Deep hollows traced themselves beneath eyes which yet grew even more lovely as they grew less serenely bright. The blessed sleep sank not upon her brain with its wonted and healing dews. Perturbed dreams, that towards dawn succeeded the long and weary vigil of the night, shook her frame even more than the anguish of the day. In these dreams one frightful vision—a crowd—a scaffold—and the pale majestic face of her lover, darkened by unutterable pangs of pride and sorrow, were for ever present before her. Till now she and Ellinor had always shared the same bed : this Madeline would no longer suffer. In vain Ellinor wept and pleaded. “No,” said Madeline, with a hollow voice : “at night I see him. My soul is alone with his ; but—but,”—and she burst into an agony of tears—“the most dreadful thought is this—I cannot master my dreams. And sometimes I start

and wake, and find that in sleep I have believed him guilty,—nay, O God! that *his* lips have proclaimed the guilt! And shall any living being—shall any but God, who reads not words but hearts, hear this hideous falsehood—this ghastly mockery of the lying sleep? No, I must be alone! The very stars should not hear what is forced from me in the madness of my dreams.”

But not in vain, or not excluded from *her*, was that elastic and consoling spirit, of which I have before spoken. As Aram recovered the tenor of his self-possession, a more quiet and peaceful calm diffused itself over the mind of Madeline. Her high and starry nature could comprehend those sublime inspirations of comfort, which lift us from the lowest abyss of this world to the contemplation of all that the yearning visions of mankind have painted in another. She would sit, rapt and absorbed for hours together, till these contemplations assumed the colour of a gentle and soft insanity. “Come, dearest Madeline,” Ellinor would say—“come, you have thought enough; my poor father asks to see you.”

“Hush!” Madeline answered. “Hush, I have been walking with Eugene in heaven: and oh! there are green woods and lulling waters above, as there are on earth, and we see the stars quite near, and I cannot tell you how happy their smile makes those who look upon them. And Eugene never starts there, nor frowns, nor walks aside, nor looks on me with an estranged and chilling look; but his face is as calm

and bright as the face of an angel :—and his voice !—it thrills amidst all the music which plays there night and day—softer than their softest note. And we are married, Ellinor, at last. We were married in heaven, and all the angels came to the marriage ! I am now so happy that we were not wed before ! What ! are you weeping, Ellinor ? Ah, we never weep in heaven ! but we will all go there again—all of us, hand in hand !”

These affecting hallucinations terrified them, lest they should settle into a *confirmed* loss of reason ; but perhaps without cause. They never lasted long, and never occurred but after moods of abstraction of unusual duration. To her they probably supplied what sleep does to others—a relaxation and refreshment—an escape from the consciousness of life. And, indeed, it might always be noted that, after such harmless aberrations of the mind, Madeline seemed more collected and patient in thought, and, for the moment, even stronger in frame than before. Yet the body evidently pined and languished, and each week made palpable decay in her vital powers.

Every time Aram saw her, he was startled at the alteration ; and kissing her cheek, her lips, her temples, in an agony of grief, wondered that to him alone it was forbidden to weep. Yet after all, when she was gone, and he again alone, he could not but think death likely to prove to her the most happy of earthly boons. He was not sanguine of acquittal ; and even in acquittal, a voice at his heart suggested insuperable barriers

to their union, which had not existed when it was first anticipated.

“Yes, let her die,” he would say, “let her die ; *she* at least is certain of heaven !” But the human infirmity clung around him, and notwithstanding this seeming resolution in her absence, he did not mourn the less, he was not stung the less, when he saw her again, and beheld a new character from the hand of death graven upon her form. No ; we may triumph over all weakness but that of the affections ! Perhaps, in this dreary and haggard interval of time, these two persons loved each other more purely, more strongly, more enthusiastically, than they had ever done at any former period of their eventful history. Over the hardest stone, as over the softest turf, the green moss *will* force its verdure and sustain its life !

CHAPTER IV.

The Evening before the Trial.—The Cousins.—The Change in Madeline.—The Family of Grassdale meet once more beneath one Roof.

Each substance of a grief hath twenty shadows,
For Sorrow's eye, glazed with blinding tears,
Divides one thing entire to many objects.

Hope is a flatterer,
A parasite, a keeper back of death,
Who gently would dissolve the bands of death,
Which false Hope lingers in extremity.—*Richard II.*

It was the evening before the trial. Lester and his daughters lodged at a retired and solitary house in the suburbs of the town of York; and thither, from the village some miles distant, in which he had chosen his own retreat, Walter now proceeded across fields laden with the ripening corn. The last and the richest month of summer had commenced; but the harvest was not yet begun, and deep and golden showed the vegetation of life, bedded among the dark verdure of the hedgerows and the "merrie woods!" The evening was serene and lulled; at a distance arose the spires and chimneys of the town, but no sound from the busy hum of men reached the ear. Nothing perhaps gives a more entire idea of stillness than the sight

of those abodes where "noise dwelleth," but where you cannot now hear even its murmurs. The stillness of a city is far more impressive than that of Nature; for the mind instantly compares the present silence with the wonted uproar. The harvest-moon rose slowly from a copse of gloomy firs, and infused its own unspeakable magic into the hush and transparency of the night. As Walter walked slowly on, the sound of voices from some rustic party going homeward broke jocundly on the silence, and when he paused for a moment at the stile, from which he first caught a glimpse of Lester's house, he saw, winding along the green hedgerow, some village pair, the "lover and the maid," who could meet only at such hours, and to whom such hours were therefore especially dear. It was altogether a scene of pure and true pastoral character, and there was all around a semblance of tranquillity, of happiness, which suits with the poetical and the scriptural paintings of a pastoral life; and which, perhaps, in a new and fertile country, may still find a realisation. From this scene, from these thoughts, the young loiterer turned with a sigh towards the solitary house in which this night could awaken none but the most anxious feelings, and that moon could beam only on the most troubled hearts.

"Terra salutiferas herbas, eademque nocentes
Nutrit; et urticæ proxima sæpe rosa est." *

* The same earth produces health-bearing and deadly plants;—and oftentimes the rose grows nearest to the nettle.

He now walked more quickly on, as if stung by his reflections, and avoiding the path which led to the front of the house, gained a little garden at the rear; and opening a gate that admitted to a narrow and shaded walk, over which the linden and nut trees made a sort of continuous and natural arbour, the moon piercing at broken intervals through the boughs, rested on the form of Ellinor Lester.

“This is most kind, most like my own sweet cousin,” said Walter, approaching; “I cannot say how fearful I was, lest you should not meet me after all.”

“Indeed, Walter,” replied Ellinor, “I found some difficulty in concealing your note, which was given me in Madeline’s presence; and still more in stealing out unobserved by her, for she has been, as you may well conceive, unusually restless the whole of this agonising day. Ah, Walter, would to God you had never left us!”

“Rather say,” rejoined Walter, “would that this unhappy man, against whom my father’s ashes still seem to me to cry aloud, had never come into our peaceful and happy valley! Then *you* would not have reproached me, that I have sought justice on a suspected murderer; nor *I* have longed for death rather than, in that justice, have inflicted such distress and horror on those whom I love the best!”

“What, Walter, you yet believe—you are yet convinced that Eugene Aram is the real criminal?”

“Let to-morrow show,” answered Walter. “But poor, poor Madeline! how does she bear up against

this long suspense? You know I have not seen her for months."

"Oh! Walter," said Ellinor, weeping bitterly; "you would not know her, so dreadfully is she altered. I fear" (here sobs choked the sister's voice, so as to leave it scarcely audible) "that she is not many weeks for this world!"

"Just Heaven! is it so?" exclaimed Walter, so shocked that the tree against which he leant scarcely preserved him from falling to the ground, as the thousand remembrances of his first love rushed upon his heart. "And Providence singled *me* out of the whole world to strike this blow!"

Despite her own grief, Ellinor was touched and smitten by the violent emotion of her cousin; and the two young persons, lovers, though love was at this time the least perceptible feeling of their breast, mingled their emotions, and sought, at least, to console and cheer each other.

"It may yet be better than our fears," said Ellinor, soothingly. "Eugene may be found guiltless, and in that joy we may forget all the past."

Walter shook his head despondingly. "*Your* heart, Ellinor, was always kind to me. You now are the only one to do me justice, and to see how utterly reproachless I am for all the misery the crime of another occasions. But my uncle—him, too, I have not seen for some time: is he well?"

"Yes, Walter, yes," said Ellinor, kindly disguising the real truth, how much her father's vigorous frame

had been bowed by his state of mind. "And I, you see," added she, with a faint attempt to smile—"I am in health at least, the same as when, this time last year, we were all happy and full of hope."

Walter looked hard upon that face, once so vivid with the rich colour and the buoyant and arch expression of liveliness and youth, now pale, subdued, and worn by the traces of constant tears; and, pressing his hand convulsively to his heart, turned away.

"But can I not see my uncle?" said he, after a pause.

"He is not at home: he has gone to the castle," replied Ellinor.

"I shall meet him, then, on his way home," returned Walter. "But, Ellinor, there is surely no truth in a vague rumour which I heard in the town, that Madeline intends to be present at the trial to-morrow?"

"Indeed, I fear that she will. Both my father and myself have sought strongly and urgently to dissuade her, but in vain. You know, with all that gentleness, how resolute she is when her mind is once determined on any object."

"But if the verdict should be against the prisoner, in her state of health, consider how terrible would be the shock! Nay, even the joy of acquittal might be equally dangerous; for Heaven's sake, do not suffer her."

"What is to be done, Walter?" said Ellinor, wringing her hands. "We cannot help it. My father has,

at last, forbid me to contradict the wish. Contradiction, the physician himself says, might be as fatal as concession can be. And my father adds, in a stern calm voice, which it breaks my heart to hear, 'Be still, Ellinor. If the innocent is to perish, the sooner she joins him the better: I would then have all my ties on the other side the grave!'

"How that strange man seems to have fascinated you all!" said Walter, bitterly.

Ellinor did not answer: over her the fascination had never been to an equal degree with the rest of her family.

"Ellinor!" said Walter, who had been walking for the last few moments to and fro with the rapid strides of a man debating with himself, and who now suddenly paused, and laid his hand on his cousin's arm—"Ellinor! I am resolved. I must, for the quiet of my soul, I must see Madeline this night, and win her forgiveness, for all I have been made the unintentional agent of Providence to bring upon her. The peace of my future life may depend on this single interview. What if Aram be condemned?—and—in short, it is no matter—I *must* see her."

"She would not hear of it, I fear," said Ellinor, in alarm. "Indeed, you cannot; you do not know her state of mind."

"Ellinor!" said Walter, doggedly, "I am resolved." And so saying, he moved towards the house.

"Well, then," said Ellinor, whose nerves had been greatly shattered by the scenes and sorrow of the last

several months, "if it must be so, wait at least till I have gone in, and consulted or prepared her."

"As you will, my gentlest, kindest cousin; I know your prudence and affection. I leave you to obtain me this interview; you can, and will, I am convinced."

"Do not be sanguine, Walter. I can only promise to use my best endeavours," answered Ellinor, blushing as he kissed her hand; and, hurrying up the walk, she disappeared within the house.

Walter walked for some moments about the alley in which Ellinor had left him; but, growing impatient, he at length wound through the overhanging trees, and the house stood immediately before him—the moonlight shining full on the window-panes, and sleeping in quiet shadow over the green turf in front. He approached yet nearer, and through one of the windows, by a single light in the room, he saw Ellinor leaning over a couch, on which a form reclined, that his heart, rather than his sight, told him was his once-adored Madeline. He stopped, and his breath heaved thick; he thought of their common home at Grassdale, of the old manor-house, of the little parlour, with the woodbine at its casement, of the group within, once so happy and light-hearted, of which he had formerly made the one most buoyant, and not least loved. And now this strange, this desolate house, himself estranged from all once regarding him (and those broken-hearted), this night ushering what a morrow! He groaned almost aloud, and retreated

once more into the shadow of the trees. In a few minutes the door at the right of the building opened, and Ellinor came forth with a quick step.

“Come in, dear Walter,” said she; “Madeline has consented to see you: nay, when I told her you were here, and desired an interview, she paused but for one instant, and then begged me to admit you.”

“God bless her!” said poor Walter, drawing his hand across his eyes, and following Ellinor to the door.

“You will find her greatly changed!” whispered Ellinor, as they gained the outer hall; “be prepared!”

Walter did not reply, save by an expressive gesture; and Ellinor led him into a room, which communicated by one of those glass doors often to be seen in the old-fashioned houses of country towns, with the one in which he had previously seen Madeline. With a noiseless step, and almost holding his breath, he followed his fair guide through this apartment, and he now stood by the couch, on which Madeline still reclined. She held out her hand to him—he pressed it to his lips, without daring to look her in the face: and after a moment’s pause, she said—

“So, you wished to see me, Walter! It is an anxious night this for all of us!”

“For *all!*” repeated Walter, emphatically; “and for me not the least!”

“We have known some sad days since we last met!” renewed Madeline: and there was another and an embarrassed pause.

“Madeline—dearest Madeline!” said Walter, and at length dropping on his knee; “you, whom while I was yet a boy I so fondly, passionately loved;—you who yet are—who, while I live, ever will be, so inexpressibly dear to me—say but one word to me in this uncertain and dreadful epoch of our fate—say but one word to me—say you feel you are conscious that throughout these terrible events *I* have not been to blame—*I* have not willingly brought this affliction upon our house—least of all upon that heart which my own would have forfeited its best blood to preserve from the slightest evil;—or, if you will not do me this justice, say at least that you forgive me!”

“I forgive you, Walter!—I do you justice, my cousin!” replied Madeline, with energy, and raising herself on her arm. “It is long since I have felt how unreasonable it was to throw any blame upon you—the mere and passive instrument of fate. If I have forborne to see you, it was not from an angry feeling, but from a reluctant weakness. God bless and preserve you, my dear cousin! I know that your own heart has bled as profusely as ours; and it was but this day that I told my father, if we never met again, to express to you some kind message as a last memorial from me. Don’t weep, Walter! It is a fearful thing to see *men* weep! It is only once that I have seen *him* weep—that was long, long ago! He has no tears in the hour of dread and danger. But no matter: this is a bad world, Walter, and I am tired of it. Are not you? Why do you look so at me, Elli-

nor? I am not mad! Has she told you that I am, Walter? Don't believe her! Look at me! I am calm and collected! Yet to-morrow is—— O God! O God!—if—if!——

Madeline covered her face with her hands, and became suddenly silent, though only for a short time; when she again lifted up her eyes, they encountered those of Walter; as through those blinding and agonised tears which are wrung from the grief of manhood, he gazed upon that face on which nothing of herself, save the divine and unearthly expression which had always characterised her loveliness, was left.

“ Yes, Walter, I am wearing fast away—fast beyond the power of chance! Thank God, who tempers the wind to the shorn lamb, if the worst happen, *we* cannot be divided long. Ere another Sabbath has passed, I may be with him in Paradise. What cause shall we then have for regret?”

Ellinor flung herself on her sister's neck, sobbing violently.—“ Yes, we shall regret you are not with us, Ellinor; but you will also soon grow tired of the world; it is a sad place—it is a wicked place—it is full of snares and pitfalls. In our walk to-day lies our destruction for to-morrow! You will find this soon, Ellinor! And you, and my father, and Walter, too, shall join us! Hark! the clock strikes! By this time to-morrow night, what triumph!—or to me at least” (sinking her voice into a whisper that thrilled through the very bones of her listeners), “ what peace!”

Happily for all parties, this distressing scene was here interrupted. Lester entered the room with the heavy step into which his once elastic and cheerful tread had subsided.

“Ha, Walter,” said he, irresolutely glancing over the group; but Madeline had already sprung from her seat.

“You have seen him!—you have seen him! And how does he—how does he look? But that I know: I know his brave heart does not sink. And what message does he send to me? And—and—tell me all, my father; quick, quick!”

“Dear, miserable child!—and miserable old man!” muttered Lester, folding her in his arms; “but we ought to take courage and comfort from him, Madeline. A hero, on the eve of battle, could not be more firm—even more cheerful. He smiled often—his old smile; and he only left tears and anxiety to us. But of you, Madeline, we spoke mostly: he would scarcely let me say a word on anything else. Oh, what a kind heart!—what a noble spirit! And perhaps a chance to-morrow may quench both. But, God! be just, and let the avenging lightning fall on the real criminal, and not blast the innocent man!”

“Amen!” said Madeline, deeply.

“Amen!” repeated Walter, laying his hand on his heart.

“Let us pray!” exclaimed Lester, animated by a sudden impulse, and falling on his knees. The whole group followed his example; and Lester, in a trem-

bling and impassioned voice, poured forth an extempore prayer, that justice might fall only where it was due. Never did that majestic and pausing moon, which filled the lowly room as with the presence of a spirit, witness a more impressive adjuration, or an audience more absorbed and rapt. Full streamed its holy rays upon the now snowy locks and upward countenance of Lester, making his venerable person more striking from the contrast it afforded to the dark and sunburnt cheek—the energetic features, and chivalric and earnest head of the young man beside him. Just in the shadow, the raven locks of Ellinor were bowed over her clasped hands—nothing of her face visible; the graceful neck and heaving breast alone distinguished from the shadow;—and, hushed in a death-like and solemn repose, the parted lips moving inaudibly; the eye fixed on vacancy; the wan, transparent hands crossed upon her bosom; the light shone with a more softened and tender ray upon the faded but all-angelic form and countenance of *her*, for whom Heaven was already preparing its eternal recompense for the ills of Earth.

CHAPTER V.

The Trial.

Equal to either fortune.—*Speech of Eugene Aram.*

A THOUGHT comes over us sometimes, in our career of pleasure, or the troubled exultation of our ambitious pursuits : a thought comes over us, like a cloud ;—that around us and about us Death—Shame—Crime—Despair, are busy at their work. I have read somewhere of an enchanted land, where the inmates walked along voluptuous gardens, and built palaces, and heard music, and made merry : while around and within the land were deep caverns, where the gnomes and the fiends dwelt : and ever and anon their groans and laughter, and the sounds of their unutterable toils or ghastly revels, travelled to the upper air, mixing in an awful strangeness with the summer festivity and buoyant occupation of those above. And this is the picture of human life ! These reflections of the maddening disparities of the world are dark, but salutary :—

“ They wrap our thoughts at banquets in the shroud ; ” *

* YOUNG.

—but we are seldom sadder without being also wiser men !

The 3d of August 1759, rose bright, calm, and clear ; it was the morning of the trial ; and when Ellinor stole into her sister's room, she found Madeline sitting before the glass, and braiding her rich locks with an evident attention and care.

“ I wish,” said she, “ that you had pleased me by dressing as for a holiday. See, I am going to wear the dress I was to have been married in.”

Ellinor shuddered ; for what is more appalling than to find the signs of gaiety accompanying the reality of anguish !

“ Yes,” continued Madeline, with a smile of inexpressible sweetness, “ a little reflection will convince you that this day ought not to be one of mourning. It was *the suspense* that has so worn out our hearts. If he is acquitted, as we all believe and trust, think how appropriate will be the outward seeming of our joy ! If not, why I shall go before him to our marriage home, and in marriage garments. Ah,” she added, after a moment's pause, and with a much more grave, settled, and intense expression of voice and countenance—“ ay ; do you remember how Eugene once told us, that if we went at noonday to the bottom of a deep pit,* we should be able to see the stars which on the level ground are invisible ? Even so, from the depths of grief—worn, wretched, seared, and dying—the blessed apparitions

* The remark is in Aristotle. Buffon quotes it, with his usual adroit felicity, in, I think, the first volume of his great work.

and tokens of heaven make themselves visible to our eyes. And I know—I have seen—I feel here,” pressing her hand on her heart, “that my course is run ; a few sands only are left in the glass. Let us waste them bravely. Stay, Ellinor ! You see these poor withered rose-leaves : Eugene gave them to me the day before—before that fixed for our marriage. I shall wear them to-day, as I would have worn them on the wedding-day. When he gathered the poor flower, how fresh it was : and I kissed off the dew ; *now* see it ! But, come, come ; this is trifling : we must not be late. Help me, Nell, help me : come, bustle, quick, quick ! Nay, be not so slovenly ; I told you I would be dressed with care to-day.”

And when Madeline *was* dressed, though the robe sat loose and in large folds over her shrunken form, yet, as she stood erect, and looked with a smile that saddened Ellinor more than tears at her image in the glass, perhaps her beauty never seemed of a more striking and lofty character—she looked, indeed, a bride, but the bride of no earthly nuptials. Presently they heard an irresolute and trembling step at the door, and Lester knocking, asked if they were prepared.

“Come in, father,” said Madeline, in a calm and even cheerful voice ; and the old man entered.

He cast a silent glance over Madeline’s white dress, and then at his own, which was deep mourning : the glance said volumes, and its meaning was not marred by words from any one of the three.

“Yes, father,” said Madeline, breaking the pause—
“we are all ready. Is the carriage here?”

“It is at the door, my child.”

“Come, then, Ellinor, come!” and leaning on her arm, Madeline walked towards the door. When she got to the threshold, she paused, and looked round the room.

“What is it you want?” asked Ellinor.

“I was but bidding all here farewell,” replied Madeline, in a soft and touching voice. “And now, before we leave the house, father—sister, one word with you; you have *ever* been very, very kind to me, and most of all in this bitter trial, when I must have taxed your patience sadly—for I know all is not right here” touching her forehead,—“I cannot go forth this day without thanking you. Ellinor, my dearest friend—my fondest sister—my playmate in gladness—my comforter in grief—my nurse in sickness;—since we were little children, we have talked together, and laughed together, and wept together, and though we knew all the thoughts of each other, we have never known one thought that we would have concealed from God;—and now we are going to part!—do not stop me, it must be so, I know it. But, after a little while may you be happy again; not so buoyant as you have been—that can never be, but still happy! You are formed for love and home, and for those ties you once thought would be mine. God grant that *I* may have suffered for us both, and that when we meet hereafter you may tell me *you* have been happy here!”

“But you, father,” added Madeline, tearing herself from the neck of her weeping sister, and sinking on her knees before Lester, who leaned against the wall convulsed with his emotions, and covering his face with his hands—“but you—what can I say to *you*? You, who have never—no, not in my first childhood, said one harsh word to me—who have sunk all a father’s authority in a father’s love—how can I say all that I feel for you?—the grateful, overflowing (painful, yet oh, how sweet!) remembrances which crowd around and suffocate me now?—The time will come when Ellinor and Ellinor’s children must be all in all to you—when of your poor Madeline nothing will be left but a memory; but they, they will watch on you and tend you, and protect your grey hairs from sorrow, as I might once have hoped I also was fated to do.”

“My child! my child! you break my heart!” faltered forth at last the poor old man, who till now had in vain endeavoured to speak.

“Give me your blessing, dear father,” said Madeline, herself overcome by her feelings:—“put your hand on my head and bless me—and say, that if I have ever unconsciously given you a moment’s pain, I am forgiven!”

“Forgiven!” repeated Lester, raising his daughter with weak and trembling arms as his tears fell fast upon her cheek—“never did I feel what an angel had sat beside my hearth till now! But be comforted—be cheered. What if Heaven had reserved its crowning mercy till this day and Eugene be amongst us, free, acquitted, triumphant before the night!”

“Ha!” said Madeline, as if suddenly roused by the thought into new life:—“ha! let us hasten to find your words true. Yes! yes!—if it should be so—if it should. And,” added she, in a hollow voice (the enthusiasm checked), “if it were not for my dreams, I might believe it would be so:—But—come—I am ready now!”

The carriage went slowly through the crowd that the fame of the approaching trial had gathered along the streets, but the blinds were drawn down, and the father and daughter escaped that worst of tortures, the curious gaze of strangers on distress. Places had been kept for them in court, and as they left the carriage and entered the fatal spot, the venerable figure of Lester, and the trembling and veiled forms that clung to him, arrested all eyes. They at length gained their seats, and it was not long before a bustle in the court drew off attention from them. A buzz, a murmur, a movement, a dread pause! Houseman was first arraigned on his former indictment, acquitted, and admitted evidence against Aram, who was thereupon arraigned. The prisoner stood at the bar! Madeline gasped for breath, and clung, with a convulsive motion, to her sister's arm. But presently, with a long sigh, she recovered her self-possession, and sat quiet and silent, fixing her eyes upon Aram's countenance; and the aspect of that countenance was well calculated to sustain her courage, and to mingle a sort of exulting pride with all the strained and fearful acuteness of her sympathy. Something, indeed, of what he had suffered was visible in the prisoner's features; the

lines around the mouth, in which mental anxiety generally the most deeply writes its traces, were grown marked and furrowed ; grey hairs were here and there scattered amongst the rich and long luxuriance of the dark brown locks, and as, before his imprisonment, he had seemed considerably younger than he was, so now time had atoned for its past delay, and he might have appeared to have told more years than had really gone over his head ; but the remarkable light and beauty of his eye was undimmed as ever, and still the broad expanse of his forehead retained its unwrinkled surface and striking expression of calmness and majesty. High, self-collected, serene, and undaunted, he looked upon the crowd, the scene, the judge, before and around him ; and, even on those who believed him guilty, that involuntary and irresistible respect which moral firmness always produces on the mind, forced an unwilling interest in his fate, and even a reluctant hope of his acquittal.

Houseman was called upon. No one could regard his face without a certain mistrust and inward shudder. In men prone to cruelty, it has generally been remarked, that there is an animal expression strongly prevalent in the countenance. The murderer and the lustful man are often alike in the physical structure. The bull-throat—the thick lips—the receding forehead—the fierce, restless eye, which some one or other says reminds you of the buffalo in the instant before he becomes dangerous, are the outward tokens of the natural animal unsoftened—unenlightened—unredeemed—consulting

only the immediate desires of his nature, whatever be the passion (lust or revenge) to which they prompt. And this animal expression, the witness of his character, was especially stamped upon Houseman's rugged and harsh features; rendered, if possible, still more remarkable at that time by a mixture of sullenness and timidity. The conviction that his own life was saved, could not prevent remorse at his treachery in accusing his comrade—a confused principle of honour of which villains are the most susceptible when every other honest sentiment has deserted them.

With a low, choked, and sometimes a faltering tone, Houseman deposed that, in the night between the 7th and 8th of January 1744-5, some time before eleven o'clock, he went to Aram's house; that they conversed on different matters; that he stayed there about an hour; that some three hours afterwards, he passed, in company with Clarke, by Aram's house, and Aram was outside the door, as if he were about to return home; that Aram invited them both to come in; that they did so; that Clarke, who intended to leave the town before daybreak, in order, it was acknowledged, to make secretly away with certain property in his possession, was about to quit the house, when Aram proposed to accompany him out of the town; that he (Aram) and Houseman then went forth with Clarke; that when they came into the field where St Robert's Cave is, Aram and Clarke went into it, over the hedge, and when they came within six or eight yards of the cave, he saw them quarrelling; that he saw Aram strike

Clarke several times, upon which Clarke fell, and he never saw him rise again ; that he saw no instrument Aram had, and knew not that he had any ; that upon this, without any interposition or alarm, he left them and returned home ; that the next morning he went to Aram's house, and asked what business he had with Clarke last night, and what he had done with him ? Aram replied not to this question ; but threatened him, if he spoke of his being in Clarke's company that night : vowing revenge, either by himself or some other person, if he mentioned anything relating to the affair. This was the sum of Houseman's evidence.

A Mr Beckwith was next called, who deposed that Aram's garden had been searched, owing to a vague suspicion that he might have been an accomplice in the frauds of Clarke ; that some parts of clothing, and also some pieces of cambric which he had sold to Clarke a little while before, were found there.

The third witness was the watchman, Thomas Barnet, who deposed, that before midnight (it might be a little after eleven) he saw a person come out from Aram's house, who had a wide coat on, with the cape about his head, and seemed to shun him ; whereupon he went up to him, and put by the cape of his great-coat, and perceived it to be Richard Houseman. He contented himself with wishing him good-night.

The officers who executed the warrant then gave their evidence as to the arrest, and dwelt on some expressions dropped by Aram before he arrived at Knaresborough, which, however, were felt to be wholly unimportant.

After this evidence there was a short pause :—and then a shiver,—that recoil and tremor which men feel at any exposition of the relics of the dead,—ran through the court ; for the next witness was mute—it was the skull of the deceased ! On the left side there was a fracture, that from the nature of it seemed as if it could only have been made by the stroke of some blunt instrument. The piece was broken, and could not be replaced but from within.

The surgeon, Mr Locock, who produced it, gave it as his opinion that no such breach could proceed from natural decay—that it was not a recent fracture by the instrument with which it was dug up, but seemed to be of many years' standing.

This made the chief part of the evidence against Aram ; the minor points we have omitted, and also such as, like that of Aram's hostess, would merely have repeated what the reader knew before.

And now closed the criminatory evidence—and now the prisoner was asked, the thrilling and awful question—“What he had to say in his own behalf?” Till now, Aram had not changed his posture or his countenance—his dark and piercing eye had for one instant fixed on each witness that appeared against him, and then dropped its gaze upon the ground. But at this moment, a faint hectic flushed his cheek, and he seemed to gather and knit himself up for defence. He glanced round the court as if to see what had been the impression created against him. His eye rested on the grey locks of Rowland Lester, who, looking down, had covered his face

with his hands. But beside that venerable form was the still and marble face of Madeline ; and even at that distance from him, Aram perceived how intent was the hushed suspense of her emotions. But when she caught his eye—that eye which, even at such a moment, beamed unutterable love, pity, regret for her—a wild, a convulsive smile of encouragement, of anticipated triumph, broke the repose of her colourless features, and suddenly dying away, left her lips apart, in that expression which the great masters of old, faithful to nature, give alike to the struggle of hope and the pause of terror.

“My lord,” began Aram, in that remarkable defence still extant, and still considered as wholly unequalled from the lips of one defending his own cause ;—“my lord, I know not whether it is of right, or through some indulgence of your lordship, that I am allowed the liberty, at this bar, and at this time, to attempt a defence ; incapable and uninstructed as I am to speak. Since, while I see so many eyes upon me, so numerous and awful a concourse, fixed with attention, and filled with I know not what expectancy, I labour, not with guilt, my lord, but with perplexity. For, having never seen a court but this, being wholly unacquainted with law, the customs of the bar, and all judiciary proceedings, I fear I shall be so little capable of speaking with propriety, that it might reasonably be expected to exceed my hope should I be able to speak at all.

“I have heard, my lord, the indictment read, wherein I find myself charged with the highest of human

crimes. You will grant me, then, your patience, if I, single and unskilful, destitute of friends, and unassisted by counsel, attempt something, perhaps like argument, in my defence. What I have to say will be but short, and that brevity may be the best part of it.

“My lord, the tenor of my life contradicts this indictment. Who can look back over what is known of my former years, and charge me with one vice—one offence? No! I concerted not schemes of fraud—projected no violence—injured no man’s property or person. My days were honestly laborious—my nights intensely studious. This egotism is not presumptuous,—is not unreasonable. What man, after a temperate use of life, a series of thinking and acting regularly, without one single deviation from a sober and even tenor of conduct, ever plunged into the depth of crime precipitately, and at once? Mankind are not instantaneously corrupted. Villany is always progressive. We decline from right—not suddenly, but step after step.

“If my life in general contradicts the indictment, my health, at that time in particular, contradicts it more. A little time before, I had been confined to my bed—I had suffered under a long and severe disorder. The distemper left me but slowly, and in part. So far from being well at the time I am charged with this fact, I never, to this day, perfectly recovered. Could a person in this condition execute violence against another?—I, feeble and valetudinary, with no inducement to engage—no ability to accomplish—no weapon where-

with to perpetrate such a fact ;—without interest, without power, without motives, without means !

“My lord, Clarke disappeared ; true : but is that a proof of his death ? The fallibility of all conclusions of such a sort from such a circumstance, is too obvious to require instances. One instance is before you : this very castle affords it.

“In June 1757, William Thompson, amidst all the vigilance of this place, in open daylight, and double-ironed, made his escape ; notwithstanding an immediate inquiry set on foot—notwithstanding all advertisements, all search, he was never seen or heard of since. If this man escaped unseen, through all these difficulties, how easy for Clarke, whom no difficulties opposed ! Yet what would be thought of a prosecution commenced against any one seen last with Thompson ?

“These bones are discovered ! Where ? Of all places in the world, can we think of any one, except, indeed, the churchyard, where there is so great a certainty of finding human bones, as a hermitage ? In time past, the hermitage was a place not only of religious retirement, but of burial. And it has scarce or never been heard of, but that every cell now known contains or contained these relics of humanity ; some mutilated—some entire ! Give me leave to remind your lordship, that here sat SOLITARY SANCTITY, and here the hermit and the anchorite hoped that repose for their bones when dead, they here enjoyed when living. I glance over a few of the many evidences that these cells were used as repositories of the dead, and enumerate a few

of the many caves similar in origin to St Robert's, in which human bones have been found." Here the prisoner instanced, with remarkable felicity, several places in which bones had been found, under circumstances and in spots analogous to those in point.* And the reader, who will remember that it is the great principle of the law, that no man can be condemned for murder unless the remains of the deceased be found, will perceive at once how important this point was to the prisoner's defence. After concluding his instances with two facts of skeletons found in fields in the vicinity of Knaresborough, he burst forth—

“Is, then, the invention of those bones forgotten or industriously concealed, that the discovery of these in question may appear the more extraordinary? Extraordinary—yet how common an event! Every place conceals such remains. In fields—in hills—in highway sides—on wastes—on commons, lie frequent and unsuspected bones. And mark—no example, perhaps, occurs of more than one skeleton being found in one cell. Here you find but one, agreeable to the peculiarity of every known cell in Britain. Had *two* skeletons been discovered, then alone might the fact have seemed suspicious and uncommon. What! Have we forgotten how difficult, as in the case of Perkin Warbec and Lambert Symnell, it has been sometimes to identify the living; and shall we now assign personality to bones—bones which may belong to either sex? How know

* See his published defence.

you that this is even the skeleton of a man? But another skeleton was discovered by some labourer; was not that skeleton averred to be Clarke's full as confidently as this?

“My lord, my lord—must some of the living be made answerable for all the bones that earth has concealed and chance exposed? The skull that has been produced has been declared fractured. But who can surely tell whether it was the cause or the consequence of death? In May 1732, the remains of William, lord archbishop of this province, were taken up by permission in their cathedral; the bones of the skull were found broken, as these are: yet *he* died by no violence—by no blow that could have caused that fracture. Let it be considered how easily the fracture on the skull produced is accounted for. At the dissolution of religious houses, the ravages of the times affected both the living and the dead. In search after imaginary treasures, coffins were broken, graves and vaults dug open, monuments ransacked, shrines demolished; Parliament itself was called in to restrain these violations. And now, are the depredations, the iniquities of those times to be visited on this? But here, above all, was a castle vigorously besieged; every spot around was the scene of a sally, a conflict, a flight, a pursuit. Where the slaughtered fell, there were they buried. What place is not burial earth in war? How many bones must still remain in the vicinity of that siege, for futurity to discover! Can you, then, with so many probable circumstances, choose the one least probable? Can you

impute to the living what zeal in its fury may have done ; what nature may have taken off and piety interred ; or what war alone may have destroyed, alone deposited ?

“And now, glance over the circumstantial evidence—how weak—how frail ! I almost scorn to *allude* to it : I will not condescend to *dwell* upon it. The witness of one man,—arraigned himself ! Is there no chance, that, to save his own life, he might conspire against mine ?—no chance, that he might have committed this murder, *if* murder hath indeed been done ?—that conscience betrayed to his first exclamation ?—that craft suggested his throwing that guilt on me, to the knowledge of which he had unwittingly confessed ? He declares that he saw me strike Clarke—that he saw him fall ; yet he utters no cry, no reproof. He calls for no aid ; he returns quietly home ; he declares that he knows not what became of the body, yet he tells where the body is laid. He declares that he went straight home, and alone : yet the woman with whom I lodged deposes that Houseman and I returned to my house in company together. What evidence is this ? and from whom does it come ?—ask yourselves. As for the rest of the evidence, what does it amount to ? The watchman sees Houseman leave my house at night. What more probable—but what less connected with the murder, real or supposed, of Clarke ? Some pieces of clothing are found buried in my garden ; but how can it be shown that they belonged to Clarke ? Who can swear to—who can prove anything so vague ? And if found

there, even if belonging to Clarke, what proof that they were there deposited by me? How likely that the real criminal may, in the dead of night, have preferred any spot, rather than that round his own home, to conceal the evidence of his crime!

“How impotent such evidence as this! and how poor, how precarious, even the strongest of mere circumstantial evidence invariably is! Let it rise to probability—to the strongest degree of probability; it is but probability still. Recollect the case of the two Harrisons, recorded by Dr Howell; both suffered on circumstantial evidence on account of the disappearance of a man, who, like Clarke, contracted debts, borrowed money, and went off unseen. And this man returned several years after their execution. Why remind you of Jacques du Moulin, in the reign of Charles II.?—why of the unhappy Coleman, convicted, though afterwards found innocent, and whose children perished for want, because the world believed the father guilty? Why should I mention the perjury of Smith, who, admitted king’s evidence, screened himself by accusing Fainloth and Loveday of the murder of Dunn? The first was executed, the second was about to share the same fate when the perjury of Smith was incontrovertibly proved.

“And now, my lord, having endeavoured to show that the whole of this charge is altogether repugnant to every part of my life; that it is inconsistent with my condition of health about that time; that no ra-

tional inference of the death of a person can be drawn from his disappearance; that hermitages were the constant repositories of the bones of the recluse; that the proofs of these are well authenticated; that the revolution in religion, or the fortunes of war, have mangled or buried the dead; that the strongest circumstantial evidence is often lamentably fallacious; that in my case that evidence, so far from being strong, is weak, disconnected, contradictory—what remains? A conclusion, perhaps, no less reasonably than impatiently wished for. I, at last, after nearly a year's confinement, equal to either fortune, intrust myself to the candour, the justice, the humanity of your lordship, and to yours, my countrymen, gentlemen of the jury."

The prisoner ceased; and the painful and choking sensations of sympathy, compassion, regret, admiration, all uniting, all mellowing into one fearful hope for his acquittal, made themselves felt through the crowded court.

In two persons only an uneasy sentiment remained—a sentiment that the prisoner had not completed that which they would have asked from him. The one was Lester;—he had expected a more warm, a more earnest, though, perhaps, a less ingenious and artful defence. He had expected Aram to dwell far more on the improbable and contradictory evidence of Houseman; and, above all, to have explained away all that was still left unaccounted for in his acquaintance with Clarke (as we still call the deceased), and the allegation that he had gone out with him on the fatal night

of the disappearance of the latter. At every word of the prisoner's defence, he had waited almost breathlessly, in the hope that the next sentence would begin an explanation or a denial on this point; and when Aram ceased, a chill, a depression, a disappointment, remained vaguely on his mind. Yet so lightly and so haughtily had Aram approached and glanced over the immediate evidence of the witnesses against him, that his silence here might have been but the natural result of a disdain that belonged essentially to his calm and proud character. The other person we referred to, and whom his defence had not impressed with a belief in its truth equal to an admiration for its skill, was one far more important in deciding the prisoner's fate—it was the judge!

But Madeline—alas! alas! how sanguine is a woman's heart, when the innocence, the fate of the one she loves is concerned!—a radiant flush broke over a face so colourless before; and with a joyous look, a kindled eye, a lofty brow, she turned to Ellinor, pressed her hand in silence, and once more gave up her whole soul to the dread procedure of the court.

The judge now began. It is greatly to be regretted that we have no minute and detailed memorial of the trial, except only the prisoner's defence. The summing-up of the judge was considered at that time scarcely less remarkable than the speech of the prisoner. He stated the evidence with peculiar care and at great length to the jury. He observed how the testimony of the other deponents confirmed that of

Houseman ; and then, touching on the contradictory parts of the latter, he made them understand how natural, how inevitable was some such contradiction in a witness who had not only to give evidence against another, but to refrain from criminating himself. There could be no doubt but that Houseman was an accomplice in the crime ; and all, therefore, that seemed improbable in his giving no alarm when the deed was done, &c. &c., was easily rendered natural and reconcilable with the other parts of his evidence. Commenting, then, on the defence of the prisoner (who, as if disdain- ing to rely on aught save his own genius or his own innocence, had called no witnesses, as he had employed no counsel), and eulogising its eloquence and art, till he destroyed their effect by guarding the jury against that impression which eloquence and art produce in defiance of simple fact, he contended that Aram had yet alleged nothing to invalidate the positive evidence against him.

I have often heard, from men accustomed to courts of law, that nothing is more marvellous than the sudden change in the mind of a jury which the summing-up of the judge can produce ; and in the present instance it was like magic. That fatal look of a common intelligence, of a common assent, was exchanged among the doomers of the prisoner's life and death as the judge concluded.

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They found the prisoner guilty.

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The judge drew on the black cap.

Aram received his sentence in profound composure. Before he left the bar he drew himself up to his full height, and looked slowly around the court with that thrilling and almost sublime unmovedness of aspect which belonged to him alone of all men, and which was rendered yet more impressive by a smile—slight, but eloquent beyond all words—of a soul collected in itself: no forced and convulsive effort vainly masking the terror or the pang; no mockery of self that would mimic contempt for others, but more in majesty than bitterness; rather as daring fate than defying the judgment of others; rather as if he wrapped himself in the independence of a quiet, than the disdain of a despairing, heart!

CHAPTER VI.

The Death.—The Prison.—An Interview.—Its Result.

Lay her i' the earth;
And from her fair and unpolluted flesh
May violets spring.

See in my heart there was a kind of fighting,
That would not let me sleep.—*Hamlet.*

“BEAR with me a little longer,” said Madeline; “I shall be well, quite well presently.”

Ellinor let down the carriage-window to admit the air; and she took the occasion to tell the coachman to drive faster. There was that change in Madeline's voice which alarmed her.

“How noble was his look! you saw him smile!” continued Madeline, talking to herself: “and they will murder him after all. Let me see; this day week—ay, ere this day week—we shall meet again.”

“Faster; for God's sake, Ellinor, tell them to drive faster!” cried Lester, as he felt the form that leaned on his bosom wax heavier and heavier. They sped on; the house was in sight, that lonely and cheerless house: not their sweet home at Grassdale, with the ivy round its porch, and the quiet church behind!

The sun was setting slowly, and Ellinor drew the blind to shade the glare from her sister's eye.

Madeline felt the kindness, and smiled. Ellinor wiped her eyes, and tried to smile again. The carriage stopped, and Madeline was lifted out; she stood, supported by her father and Ellinor, for a moment on the threshold. She looked on the golden sun and the gentle earth; and the little motes dancing in the western ray—all was steeped in quiet, and full of the peace and tranquillity of the pastoral life: "No, no," she muttered, grasping her father's hand. "How is this? this is not *his* hand! Ah, no, no; I am not with him! Father," she added, in a louder and deeper voice, rising from his breast, and standing alone and unaided—"Father, bury this little packet with me—they are his letters: do not break the seal, and—and tell him that I never felt how deeply I—loved him—till all—the world—had—deserted him!—"

She uttered a faint cry of pain, and fell at once to the ground; she lived a few hours longer, but never made speech or sign, or evinced token of life but its breath, which died at last gradually—imperceptibly—away.

On the following evening, Walter obtained entrance to Aram's cell: that morning the prisoner had seen Lester; that morning he had heard of Madeline's death. He had shed no tear; he had, in the affecting language of Scripture, "turned his face to the wall:" none had seen his emotions, yet Lester felt

in that bitter interview that his daughter was duly mourned.

Aram did not lift his eyes when Walter was admitted, and the young man stood almost at his knee before he perceived him. Aram then looked up, and they gazed on each other for a moment, but without speaking, till Walter said, in a hollow voice—

“Eugene Aram!”

“Ay!”

“Madeline Lester is no more.”

“I have heard it! I am reconciled. Better now than later.”

“Aram!” said Walter, in a tone trembling with emotion, and passionately clasping his hands, “I entreat, I implore you, at this awful time, if it be within your power, to lift from my heart a load that weighs it to the dust, that, if left there, will make me through life a crushed and miserable man:—I implore you, in the name of common humanity, by your hopes of heaven, to remove it! The time now has irrevocably passed when your denial or your confession could alter your doom; your days are numbered; there is no hope of reprieve: I implore you, then, if you were led—I will not ask how or wherefore—to the execution of the crime for the charge of which you die, to say—to whisper to me but one word of confession, and I, the sole child of the murdered man, will forgive you from the bottom of my soul.”

Walter paused, unable to proceed.

Aram's brow worked—he turned aside—he made

no answer ; his head dropped on his bosom, and his eyes were unmovedly fixed on the earth.

“ Reflect,” continued Walter, recovering himself—
“ Reflect ! I have been the involuntary instrument in bringing you to this awful fate—in destroying the happiness of my own house—in—in—in breaking the heart of the woman whom I adored even as a boy. If you be innocent, what a dreadful remembrance is left to me ! Be merciful, Aram ! be merciful : and if this deed was done by your hand, say to me but one word to remove the terrible uncertainty that now harrows up my being. What now is earth, is man, is opinion to you ? God only now can judge you. The eye of God reads your heart while I speak ; and in the awful hour when eternity opens to you, if the guilt has been indeed committed, think—oh, think how much lighter will be your offence, if, by vanquishing the stubborn heart, you can relieve a human being from a doubt that otherwise will make the curse—the horror of an existence. Aram, Aram ! if the father’s death came from you, shall the life of the son be made a burden to him through you also ? ”

“ What would you have of me ?—speak ! ” said Aram, but without lifting his face from his breast.

“ Much of your nature belies this crime. You are wise, calm, beneficent to the distressed. Revenge, passion—nay, the sharp pangs of hunger may have urged you to one criminal deed : but your soul is not wholly hardened : nay, I think I can so far trust you, that if at this dread moment—the clay of Made-

line Lester scarce yet cold, woe busy and softening at your breast, and the son of the murdered dead before you ;—if at this moment you can lay your hand on your heart, and say, ‘ Before God, and at peril of my soul, I am innocent of this deed,’ I will depart— I will believe you, and bear as bear I may the reflection that I have been one of the unconscious agents in condemning to a fearful death an innocent man ! If innocent in this—how good, how perfect in all else ! But if you cannot at so dark a crisis take that oath— then, oh then, be just—be generous, even in guilt, and let me not be haunted throughout life by the spectre of a ghastly and restless doubt ! Speak ! oh, speak ! ”

Well, well may we judge how crushing must have been that doubt in the breast of one naturally bold and fiery, when it thus humbled the very son of the murdered man to forget wrath and vengeance, and descend to prayer ! But Walter had heard the defence of Aram ; he had marked his mien ; not once in that trial had he taken his eyes from the prisoner, and he had felt, like a bolt of ice through his heart, that the sentence passed on the accused, *his* judgment could not have passed ! How dreadful must then have been the state of his mind when, repairing to Lester’s house, he found it the house of death—the pure, the beautiful spirit gone—the father mourning for his child, and not to be comforted—and Ellinor ?—No ! scenes like these, thoughts like these, pluck the pride from a man’s heart !

“Walter Lester!” said Aram, after a pause; but raising his head with a dignity, though on the features there was but one expression—woe, unutterable woe; —“Walter Lester! I had thought to quit life with my tale untold; but you have not appealed to me in vain! I tear the *self* from my heart!—I renounce the last haughty dream in which I wrapped myself from the ills around me. You shall learn all, and judge accordingly. But to your ear the tale can scarce be told:—the son cannot hear in silence that which, unless I too unjustly, too wholly condemn myself, I must say of the dead! But time,” continued Aram, muttering, and with his eyes on vacancy, “time does not press too fast. Better let the hand speak than the tongue:—yes; the day of execution is—ay, ay—two days yet to it—to-morrow? no! Young man,” he said, abruptly, turning to Walter, “on the day after to-morrow, about seven in the evening—the eve before that morn fated to be my last—come to me. At that time I will place in your hands a paper containing the whole history that connects myself with your father. On the word of a man on the brink of another world, no truth that imports your interest therein shall be omitted. But read it not till I am no more; and when read, confide the tale to none till Lester’s grey hairs have gone to the grave. This swear! ’tis an oath difficult perhaps to keep, but——”

“As my Redeemer lives, I will swear to both conditions!” cried Walter, with a solemn fervour. “But tell me now at least——”

“ Ask me no more ! ” interrupted Aram, in his turn. “ The time is near when you will know all ! Tarry that time, and leave me ! Yes, leave me now—at once—leave me ! ”

To dwell lingeringly over those passages which excite pain without satisfying curiosity, is scarcely the duty of the drama, or of that province even nobler than the drama ; for it requires minuter care—in-
dulges in more complete description—yields to more elaborate investigation of motives—commands a greater variety of chords in the human heart—to which, with poor and feeble power for so high, yet so ill appreciated a task, we now, not irreverently, if rashly, aspire !

We glance not around us at the chamber of death—at the broken heart of Lester—at the twofold agony of his surviving child—the agony which mourns and yet seeks to console another—the mixed emotions of Walter, in which an unsleeping eagerness to learn the fearful all formed the main part—the solitary cell and solitary heart of the convicted—we glance not at these ;—we pass at once to the evening in which Aram again saw Walter Lester, and for the last time.

“ You are come punctual to the hour,” said he, in a low clear voice ; “ I have not forgotten my word ; the fulfilment of that promise has been a victory over myself which no man can appreciate : but I owed it to you. I have discharged the debt. Enough !—I have done more than I at first purposed. I have extended my narration, but superficially in some parts, over my

life : that prolixity, perhaps, I owe to myself. Remember *your* promise : this seal is not broken till the pulse is stilled in the hand which now gives you these papers."

Walter renewed his oath, and Aram, pausing for a moment, continued, in an altered and softening voice—

"Be kind to Lester : soothe, console him ;—never by a hint let him think otherwise of me than he does. For his sake more than mine I ask this. Venerable, kind old man ! the warmth of human affection has rarely glowed for me. To the few who loved me, how deeply I have repaid the love ! But these are not words to pass between you and me. Farewell ! Yet, before we part, say this much : whatever I have revealed in this confession—whatever has been my wrong to you, or whatever (a less offence) the language I have now, justifying myself, used to—to your father—say that you grant me that pardon which one man may grant another."

"Fully, cordially," said Walter.

"In the day that for you brings the death that tomorrow awaits me," said Aram, in a deep tone, "be that forgiveness accorded to yourself. Farewell. In that untried variety of being which spreads beyond us, who knows but that, in our several progress from grade to grade, and world to world, our souls, though in far distant ages, may meet again !—one dim and shadowy memory of this hour the link between us : farewell—farewell !"

For the reader's interest we think it better (and certainly it is more immediately in the due course of narrative, if not of actual events) to lay a once before him the confession that Aram placed in Walter's hands, without waiting till that time when Walter himself broke the seal of a confession—not of deeds alone, but of thoughts how wild and entangled—of feelings how strange and dark—of a starred soul that had wandered from how proud an orbit, to what perturbed and unholy regions of night and chaos! For me, I have not sought to derive the reader's interest from the vulgar sources that such a tale might have afforded; I have suffered him, almost from the beginning, to pierce into Aram's secret; and I have *prepared* him for that guilt, with which other narrators of this story might have only sought to *surprise*.

CHAPTER VII.

The Confession; and the Fate.

In winter's tedious nights, sit by the fire
With good old folks, and let them tell thee tales
Of woeful ages long ago betid:
And ere thou bld good-night, to quit their grief,
Tell them the lamentable fall of me.—*Richard II.*

I WAS born at Ramsgill, a little village in Netherdale. My family had originally been of some rank; they were formerly lords of the town of Aram, on the southern banks of the Tees. But time had humbled these pretensions to consideration; though they were still fondly cherished by the inheritors of an ancient name, and idle but haughty recollections. My father resided on a small farm, and was especially skilful in horticulture; a taste I derived from him. When I was about thirteen, the deep and intense passion that has made the demon of my life, first stirred palpably within me. I had always been, from my cradle, of a solitary disposition, and inclined to reverie and musing; these traits of character heralded the love that now seized me—the love of knowledge. Opportunity or accident first directed my attention to the abstruser sciences. I poured my soul over that noble study, which is the best foundation of all true discovery;

and the success I met with soon turned my pursuits into more alluring channels. History, poetry—the mastery of the past, and the spell that admits us into the visionary world—took the place which lines and numbers had done before. I became gradually more and more rapt and solitary in my habits ; knowledge assumed a yet more lovely and bewitching character, and every day the passion to attain it increased upon me ; I do not—I have not now the heart to do it—enlarge upon what I acquired without assistance, and with labour sweet in proportion to its intensity.* The world, the creation, all things that lived, moved, and were, became to me objects contributing to one passionate, and, I fancied, one exalted end. I suffered the lowlier pleasures of life, and the charms of its more common ties, to glide away from me untasted and unfelt. As you read, in the East, of men remaining motionless for days together, with their eyes fixed upon the heavens, my mind, absorbed in the contemplation of the things above its reach, had no sight of what passed around. My parents died, and I was an orphan. I had no home, and no wealth ; but wherever the field contained a flower, or the heavens a star, there was matter of thought, and food for delight, to me. I wandered alone for months together, seldom sleeping but in the open air, and shunning the human form as that part of God's works from which I could learn the

* We learn from a letter of Eugene Aram's, now extant, that his method of acquiring the learned languages was to linger over five lines at a time, and never to quit a passage till he thought he had comprehended its meaning.

least. I came to Knaresborough; the beauty of the country, a facility in acquiring books from a neighbouring library that was open to me, made me resolve to settle there. And now new desires opened upon me with new stores: I became haunted with the ambition to enlighten and instruct my race. At first I had loved knowledge solely for itself: I now saw afar an object grander than knowledge. To what end, said I, are these labours? Why do I feed a lamp which consumes itself in a desert place. Why do I heap up riches without asking who shall gather them? I was restless and discontented? What could I do? I was friendless; I was strange to my kind; I saw my desires checked when their aim was at the highest: all that was aspiring in my hopes, and ardent in my nature, was cramped and chilled. I exhausted the learning within my reach. Where, with my appetite excited, not slaked, was I, destitute and penniless, to search for more? My abilities, by bowing them to the lowliest tasks, but kept me from famine:—was this to be my lot for ever? And all the while I was thus grinding down my soul in order to satisfy the vile physical wants, what golden hours, what glorious advantages, what openings into new heavens of science, what chances of illuminating mankind were for ever lost to me! Sometimes, when the young, to whom I taught some homely elements of knowledge, came around me; when they looked me in the face with their laughing eyes; when—for they all loved me—they told me their little pleasures and their petty

sorrows, I have wished that I could have gone back again into childhood, and, becoming as one of them, enter into that heaven of quiet which was denied me now. Yet it was more often with an indignant than a sorrowful spirit that I looked upon my lot. For there lay my life imprisoned in penury as in the walls of a jail—Heaven smiled and the earth blossomed around, but how scale the stern barriers?—how steal through the inexorable gate? True, that by bodily labour I could give food to the body—to starve by such labour the craving wants of the mind. Beg I could not. When ever lived the real student, the true minister and priest of Knowledge, who was not filled with the lofty sense of the dignity of his calling? Was I to show the sores of my pride, and strip my heart from its clothing, and ask the dull fools of wealth not to let a scholar starve? No!—he whom the vilest poverty ever stooped to this may be the quack, but never the true disciple, of Learning. What did I then? I devoted the meanest part of my knowledge to the procuring the bare means of life, and the knowledge that pierced to the depths of earth, and numbered the stars of heaven—why, that was valueless in the market!

“In Knaresborough, at this time, I met a distant relation, Richard Houseman. Sometimes in our walks we encountered each other; for he sought me, and I could not always avoid him. He was a man, like myself, born to poverty, yet he had always enjoyed what to him was wealth. This seemed a mystery to me;

and when we met, we sometimes conversed upon it. 'You are poor, with all your wisdom,' said he. 'I know nothing; but I am never poor. Why is this? The world is my treasury.—I live upon my kind.—Society is my foe.—Laws order me to starve; but self-preservation is an instinct more sacred than society, and more imperious than laws.'

"The audacity of his discourse revolted me. At first I turned away in disgust;—then I stood and heard—to ponder and inquire. Nothing so tasks the man of books as his first blundering guess at the problems of a guilty heart! Houseman had been a soldier; he had seen the greatest part of Europe; he possessed a strong shrewd sense; he was a villain;—but a villain bold, adroit, and not then thoroughly unredeemed. Trouble seized me as I heard him, and the shadow of his life stretched farther and darker over the wilderness of mine. When Houseman asked me, 'What law befriended the man without money?—to what end I had cultivated my mind?—or what good the voice of knowledge could effect while Poverty forbade it to be heard?' the answer died upon my lips. Then I sought to escape from these terrible doubts. I plunged again into my books. I called upon my intellect to defend—and my intellect betrayed me. For suddenly, as I pored over my scanty books, a gigantic discovery in science gleamed across me. I saw the means of effecting a vast benefit to truth and to man—of adding a new conquest to that only empire which no fate can overthrow, and no time wear away. And in this dis-

covery I was stopped by the total inadequacy of my means. The books and implements I required were not within my reach—a handful of gold would buy them: I had not wherewithal to buy bread for the morrow's meal. In my solitude and misery this discovery haunted me like a visible form: it smiled upon me, a fiend that took the aspect of beauty; it wooed me to its charms that it might lure my soul into its fangs. I heard it murmur, 'One bold deed, and I am thine! Wilt thou lie down in the ditch and die the dog's death, or hazard thy life for the means that may serve and illumine the world? Shrinkest thou from men's laws, though the laws bid thee rot on their outskirts? Is it not for the service of man that thou shouldst for once break the law on behalf of that knowledge from which all laws take their source? If thou wrongest the one, thou shalt repay it in boons to the million. For the ill of an hour thou shalt give a blessing to ages!' So spoke to me the tempter. And one day, when the tempter spoke loudest, Houseman met me, accompanied by a stranger who had just visited our town, for what purpose you know already. His name—supposed name—was Clarke. Man, I am about to speak plainly of that stranger—his character and his fate. And yet—yet you are his son! I would fain soften the colouring; but I speak truth of myself, and I must not, unless I would blacken my name yet deeper than it deserves, varnish truth when I speak of others. Houseman joined, and presented to me this person. From the first I felt a dislike of the stranger, which

indeed it was easy to account for. He was of a careless and somewhat insolent manner. His countenance was impressed with the lines and character of a thousand vices : you read in the brow and eye the history of a sordid yet reckless life. His conversation was repellent to me beyond expression. He uttered the meanest sentiments, and he chuckled over them as the maxims of a superior sagacity ; he avowed himself a knave upon system, and upon the lowest scale. To overreach, to deceive, to elude, to shuffle, to fawn and to lie, were the arts to which he confessed with so naked and cold a grossness, that one perceived that in the long habits of debasement he was unconscious of what was not debased. Houseman seemed to draw him out : Clarke told us anecdotes of his rascality, and the distresses to which it had brought him ; and he finished by saying : ‘ Yet you see me now almost rich, and wholly contented. I have always been the luckiest of human beings : no matter what ill chances to-day, good turns up to-morrow. I confess that I bring on myself the ill, and Providence sends me the good.’ We met accidentally more than once, and his conversation was always of the same strain—his luck and his rascality : he had no other theme, and no other boast. And did not this aid the voice of the tempter ? Was it not an ordination that called upon men to take fortune in their own hands, when Fate lavished her rewards on this low and creeping thing, that could only enter even Vice by its sewers and alleys ? Was it worth while to be virtuous, and look on, while the

bad seized upon the feast of life? This man was but moved by the basest passions, the pettiest desires: he gratified them, and fate smiled upon his daring. I, who had shut out from my heart the poor temptations of sense—I, who fed only the most glorious visions, the most august desires—I denied myself their fruition, trembling and spell-bound in the ceremonies of human laws, without hope, without reward—losing the very powers of virtue because I would not stray into crime!

“These thoughts fell on me darkly and rapidly; but they led as yet to no result. I saw nothing beyond them. I suffered my indignation to gnaw my heart; and preserved the same calm and serene demeanour which had grown with my growth of mind. Strange that while I upbraided Fate, I did not cease to love mankind. I coveted—what? the power to serve them. I had been kind and loving to all things from a boy; there was not a dumb animal that would not single me from a crowd as its protector,* and yet I was doomed—but I must not forestall the dread catastrophe of my life. In returning, at night, to my own home, from

* All the authentic anecdotes of Aram corroborate the fact of his natural gentleness to all things. A clergyman (the Rev. Mr Hinton) said that he used frequently to observe Aram, when walking in the garden, stoop down to remove a snail or worm from the path, to prevent its being destroyed. Mr Hinton ingeniously conjectured that Aram wished to atone for his crime by showing mercy to every animal and insect; but the fact is, that there are several anecdotes to show that he was equally humane *before* the crime was committed. Such are the strange contradictions of the human heart.

my long and solitary walks, I often passed the house in which Clarke lodged ; and sometimes I met him reeling by the door, insulting all who passed ; and yet their resentment was absorbed in their disgust. ‘And this loathsome and grovelling thing,’ said I, inly, ‘squanders on low excesses, wastes upon outrages to society, that with which I could make my soul as a burning lamp, that should shed a light over the world !’

“There was that in the man’s vices that revolted me far more than the villany of Houseman. The latter had possessed few advantages of education ; he descended to no minutiae of sin ; he was a plain, blunt, coarse wretch, and his sense threw something respectable around his vices. But in Clarke you saw the traces of happier opportunities, of better education ; it was in him not the coarseness of manner that displeased, it was the lowness of sentiment that sickened me. Had Houseman money in his purse, he would have paid a debt and relieved a friend from mere indifference ; not so the other. Had Clarke been overflowing with wealth, he would have slipped from a creditor and duped a friend ; there was a pitiful cunning in his nature, which made him regard the lowest meanness as the subtlest wit. His mind, too, was not only degraded, but broken by his habits of life ; he had the laugh of the idiot at his own debasement. Houseman was young—he might amend ; but Clarke had grey hairs and dim eyes ; was old in constitution, if not years ; and everything in him was hopeless and con-

firmed : the leprosy was in the system. Time, in this, has made Houseman what Clarke was then.

“ One day, in passing through the street, though it was broad noon, I encountered Clarke in a state of intoxication, and talking to a crowd he had collected around him. I sought to pass in an opposite direction ; he would not suffer me ; he, whom I sickened to touch, to see, threw himself in my way, and affected gibe and insult, nay, even threat. But when he came near, he shrank before the mere glance of my eye, and I passed on, unheeding him. The insult galled me ; he had taunted my poverty—poverty was a favourite jest with him ; it galled me : anger ? revenge ? no ! *those* passions I had never felt for any man. I could not rouse them for the first time at such a cause ; yet I was lowered in my own eyes, I was stung. Poverty ! *he taunt me !* I wandered from the town, and paused by the winding and shagged banks of the river. It was a gloomy winter’s day, the waters rolled on black and sullen, and the dry leaves rustled desolately beneath my feet. Who shall tell us that outward nature has no effect upon our mood ? All around seemed to frown upon my lot. I read in the face of heaven and earth a confirmation of the curse which man hath set upon poverty. I leaned against a tree that overhung the waters, and suffered my thoughts to glide on in the bitter silence of their course. I heard my name uttered—I felt a hand on my arm, I turned, and Houseman was by my side.

“ ‘ What ! moralising ? ’ said he, with his rude smile.

“I did not answer him.

“‘Look,’ said he, pointing to the waters, ‘where yonder fish lies waiting his prey,—that prey his kind. Come, you have read Nature, is it not so universally?’

“Still I did not answer him.

“‘They who do not as the rest,’ he renewed, ‘fulfil not the object of their existence ; they seek to be wiser than their tribe, and are fools for their pains. Is it not so ? I am a plain man, and would learn.’

“Still I did not answer.

“‘You are silent,’ said he : ‘do I offend you?’

“‘No!’

“‘Now, then,’ he continued, ‘strange as it may seem, we, so different in mind, are at this moment alike in fortunes. I have not a guinea in the wide world ; you, perhaps, are equally destitute. But mark the difference : I, the ignorant man, ere three days have passed, will have filled my purse ; you, the wise man, will be still as poor. Come, cast away your wisdom, and do as I do.’

“‘How?’

“‘Take from the superfluities of others what your necessities crave. My horse, my pistol, a ready hand, a stout heart—these are to me what coffers are to others. There is the chance of detection and of death ; I allow it ; but is not this chance better than some certainties?’

“The tempter with the glorious face and the demon fangs rose again before me, and spoke in the robber’s voice.

“‘Will you share the danger and the booty?’ renewed Houseman, in a low voice.

“‘Speak out,’ said I; ‘explain your purpose!’

“Houseman’s looks brightened.

“‘Listen!’ said he: ‘Clarke, despite his present wealth lawfully gained, is about to purloin more; he has converted his legacy into jewels; he has borrowed other jewels on false pretences; he intends to make these also his own, and to leave the town in the dead of night; he has confided to me his purpose, and asked my aid. He and I, be it known to you, were friends of old; we have shared together other dangers and other spoils. Now do you guess my meaning? Let us ease him of his burden! I offer to you the half; share the enterprise and its fruits.’

“I rose, I walked away, I pressed my hands on my heart. Houseman saw the conflict: he followed me; he named the value of the prize he proposed to gain: that which he called my share placed all my wishes within my reach! Leisure—independence—knowledge. The sublime discovery—the possession of the glorious Fiend. All, all within my grasp—and by a single deed—no frauds oft repeated—no sins long continued—a single deed! I breathed heavily—but the weight still lay upon my heart. I shut my eyes and shuddered—the mortal shuddered, but still the demon smiled.

“‘Give me your hand,’ said Houseman.

“‘No, no,’ I said, breaking away from him. ‘I must pause—I must consider—I do not yet refuse, but I will not now decide.’

“Houseman pressed, but I persevered in my determination ;—he would have threatened me, but my nature was haughtier than his, and I subdued him. It was agreed that he should seek me that night and learn my choice—the next night was the one on which the robbery was to be committed. We parted—I returned an altered man to my home. Fate had woven her mesh around me—a new incident had occurred which strengthened the web : there was a poor girl whom I had been accustomed to see in my walks. She supported her family by her dexterity in making lace—a quiet, patient-looking, gentle creature. Clarke had, a few days since, under pretence of purchasing lace, decoyed her to his house (when all but himself were from home), where he used the most brutal violence towards her. The extreme poverty of her parents had enabled him easily to persuade them to hush up the matter, but something of the story got abroad ; the poor girl was marked out for that gossip and scandal which among the very lowest classes are as coarse in the expression as malignant in the sentiment ; and in the paroxysm of shame and despair, the unfortunate girl had that day destroyed herself. This melancholy event wrung forth from the parents the real story : the event and the story reached my ears in the very hour in which my mind was wavering to and fro. ‘And it is to such uses,’ said the tempter, ‘that this man puts his gold !’

“Houseman came, punctual to our dark appointment. I gave him my hand in silence. The tragic end of his

victim, and the indignation it caused, made Clarke yet more eager to leave the town. He had settled with Houseman that he would abscond that very night, not wait for the next, as at first he had intended. His jewels and property were put in a small compass. He had arranged that he would, towards midnight or later, quit his lodging; and about a mile from the town, Houseman had engaged to have a chaise in readiness. For this service Clarke had promised Houseman a reward, with which the latter appeared contented. It was agreed that I should meet Houseman and Clarke at a certain spot in their way from the town. Houseman appeared at first fearful lest I should relent and waver in my purpose. It is never so with men whose thoughts are deep and strong. To resolve was the arduous step—once resolved, and I cast not a look behind. Houseman left me for the present. I could not rest in my chamber. I went forth and walked about the town: the night deepened—I saw the lights in each house withdrawn, one by one, and at length all was hushed: Silence and Sleep kept court over the abodes of men. Nature never seemed to me to make so dread a pause.

“The moon came out, but with a pale and sickly countenance. It was winter; the snow, which had been falling towards eve, lay deep upon the ground; and the frost seemed to lock the universal nature into the same dread tranquillity which had taken possession of my soul.

“Houseman was to have come to me at midnight,

just before Clarke left his house, but it was nearly two hours after that time ere he arrived. I was then walking to and fro before my own door; I saw that he was not alone, but with Clarke. 'Ha!' said he, 'this is fortunate; I see you are just going home. You were engaged, I recollect, at some distance from the town, and have, I suppose, just returned. Will you admit Mr Clarke and myself for a short time?—for to tell you the truth,' said he, in a lower voice—'the watchman is about, and we must not be seen by him! I have told Clarke that he may trust you,—*we* are relatives!'

"Clarke, who seemed strangely credulous and indifferent, considering the character of his associate—but those whom Fate destroys she first blinds—made the same request in a careless tone, assigning the same cause. Unwillingly, I opened the door and admitted them. We went up to my chamber. Clarke spoke with the utmost unconcern of the fraud he purposed, and, with a heartlessness that made my veins boil, of the poor wretch his brutality had destroyed. They stayed for nearly an hour, for the watchman remained some time in that beat—and then Houseman asked me to accompany them a little way out of the town. Clarke seconded the request. We walked forth; the rest—why need I tell!—I cannot—O God, I cannot! Houseman lied in the court. I did not strike the blow—I never designed a murder. Crime enough in a robber's deed! He fell—he grasped my hand, raised not to strike but to shield him! Never more has the

right hand cursed by that dying clasp been given in pledge of human faith and friendship. But the deed was done, and the robber's comrade, in the eyes of man and law, was the murderer's accomplice.

“Houseman divided the booty : my share he buried in the earth, leaving me to withdraw it when I chose. There, perhaps, it lies still. I never touched what I had murdered my *own* life to gain. His share, by the aid of a gypsy hag with whom he had dealings, Houseman removed to London. And now, mark what poor strugglers we are in the eternal web of destiny ! Three days after that deed, a relation who neglected me in life died, and left me wealth ! wealth at least to me ! —Wealth, greater than that for which I had —— ! The news fell on me as a thunderbolt. Had I waited but three little days ! Just Heaven ! when they told me, I thought I heard the devils laugh out at the fool who had boasted wisdom. Had I waited but three days, three little days !—Had but a dream been sent me, had but my heart cried within me—‘Thou hast suffered long, tarry yet !’* No, it was for this, for the

* Aram has hitherto been suffered to tell his own tale without comment or interruption. The chain of reasonings, the metaphysical labyrinth of defence and motive, which he wrought around his guilt, it was, in justice to him, necessary to give at length, in order to throw a clearer light on his character—and lighten, perhaps, in some measure, the colours of his crime. No moral can be more impressive than that which teaches how man can entangle himself in his own sophisms—that moral is better, viewed aright, than volumes of homilies. But here I must pause for one moment, to bid the reader remark, that that event which confirmed Aram

guilt and its penance, for the wasted life and the shameful death—with all my thirst for good, my dreams of glory—that I was born, that I was marked from my first sleep in the cradle!

“The disappearance of Clarke of course created great excitement; those whom he had overreached had naturally an interest in discovering him. Some vague surmises that he might have been made away with were rumoured abroad. Houseman and I, owing to some concurrence of circumstance, were examined,—not that suspicion attached to me before or after the examination. That ceremony ended in nothing. Houseman did not betray himself; and I, who from a boy had mastered my passions, could master also the nerves by which passions are betrayed; but I read in the face of the woman with whom I lodged that I was suspected. Houseman told me that she had openly expressed her suspicion to him; nay, he entertained some design against her life, which he naturally abandoned on quitting the town. This he did soon afterwards. I did not linger long behind him. I received my legacy, and departed on foot to Scotland. And now I was above want—was I at rest? Not yet. I felt urged on to wander—Cain’s curse descends to Cain’s

in the bewildering doctrines of his pernicious fatalism, ought rather to inculcate the divine virtue—the foundation of all virtues, Heathen or Christian—that which Epictetus made clear and Christ sacred—**FORTITUDE**. The reader will note that the answer to the reasonings that probably *convinced* the mind of Aram, and blinded him to his crime, may be found in *the change of feelings* by which the crime was followed. I must apologise for this interruption—it seemed to me advisable in this place.

children. I travelled for some considerable time,—I saw men and cities, and I opened a new volume in my kind. It was strange ; but before the deed I was as a child in the ways of the world, and a child, despite my knowledge, might have duped me. The moment after it a light broke upon me,—it seemed as if my eyes were touched with a charm, and rendered capable of piercing the hearts of men ! Yes, it *was* a charm—a new charm—it was SUSPICION ! I now practised myself in the use of arms,—they made my sole companions. Peaceful as I seemed to the world, I felt there was that eternally within me with which the world was at war.

“And what became of the superb ambition which had undone me ? Where vanished that Grand Discovery which was to benefit the world ? The ambition died in remorse, and the vessel that should have borne me to the far Land of Science lay rotting piecemeal on a sea of blood. The Past destroyed my old heritage in the Future. The consciousness that at any hour, in the possession of honours, by the hearth of love, I might be dragged forth and proclaimed a murderer ; that I held my life, my reputation, at the breath of accident ; that in the moment I least dreamed of, the earth might yield its dead, and the gibbet demand its victim :—this could I feel—all this—and not see a spectre in the place of science ?—a spectre that walked by my side, that slept in ‘my bed, that rose from my books, that glided between me and the stars of heaven, that stole along the flowers, and withered their sweet

breath ; that whispered in my ear, 'Toil, fool, and be wise ; the gift of Wisdom is to place us above the reach of fortune, but *thou* art her veriest minion !' Yes ; I paused at last from my wanderings, and surrounded myself with books, and knowledge became once more to me what it had been, a thirst ; but not what it had been, a reward. I occupied my thoughts, I laid up new hoards within my mind, I looked around, and I saw few whose stores were like my own ; but—gone for ever the sublime desire of applying wisdom to the service of mankind ! Mankind had grown my foes. I looked upon them with other eyes. I knew that I carried within me that secret which, if bared to day, would make them loathe and hate me,—yea, though I coined my future life into one series of benefits to them and their posterity ! Was not this thought enough to quell my ardour—to chill activity into rest ? The brighter the honours I might win—the greater the services I might bestow on the world, the more dread and fearful might be my fall at last ! I might be but piling up the scaffold from which I was to be hurled ! Possessed by these thoughts, a new view of human affairs succeeded to my old aspirings :—the moment a man feels that an object has ceased to charm, his reasonings reconcile himself to his loss. 'Why,' said I—'why flatter myself that *I can* serve, that I can enlighten mankind ? Are we fully sure that individual wisdom has ever, in reality, done so ? Are we really better because Newton lived, and happier because Bacon thought ?' These freezing reflections pleased the

present state of my mind more than the warm and yearning enthusiasm it had formerly nourished. Mere worldly ambition from a boy I had disdained;—the true worth of sceptres and crowns, the disquietude of power, the humiliations of vanity, had never been disguised from my sight. Intellectual ambition had inspired me. I now regarded it equally as a delusion. I coveted light solely for my own soul to bathe in.

“Rest now became to me the sole *to kalon*, the sole charm of existence. I grew enamoured of the doctrine of those old mystics who have placed happiness only in an even and balanced quietude. And where but in utter loneliness was that quietude to be enjoyed? I no longer wondered that men in former times, when consumed by the recollection of some haunting guilt, fled to the desert and became hermits. Tranquillity and solitude are the only soothers of a memory deeply troubled—light griefs fly to the crowd, fierce thoughts must battle themselves to rest. Many years had flown, and I had made my home in many places. All that was turbulent, if not all that was unquiet, in my recollections, had died away. Time had lulled me into a sense of security. I breathed more freely. I sometimes stole from the past. Since I had quitted Knaresborough, chance had often thrown it in my power to serve my brethren—not by wisdom, but by charity or courage—by individual acts that it soothed me to remember. If the grand aim of enlightening a world was gone, if to so enlarged a benevolence had succeeded apathy or despair, still the man, the human

man, clung to my heart ; still was I as prone to pity, as prompt to defend, as glad to cheer, whenever the vicissitudes of life afforded me the occasion ; and to poverty, most of all, my hand never closed. For oh ! what a terrible devil creeps into that man's soul who sees famine at his door. One tender act, and how many black designs, struggling into life within, you may crush for ever ! He who deems the world his foe,—convince *him* that he has one friend, and it is like snatching a dagger from his hand !

“I came to a beautiful and remote part of the country. Walter Lester, I came to Grassdale !—the enchanting scenery around, the sequestered and deep retirement of the place, arrested me at once. ‘And among these valleys,’ I said, ‘will I linger out the rest of my life, and among these quiet graves shall mine be dug, and my secret shall die with me !’

“I rented the lonely house in which I dwelt when you first knew me ; thither I transported my books and instruments of science, and a deep quiet, almost amounting to content, fell like a sweet sleep upon my soul !

“In this state of mind, the most free from memory that I had known for twelve years, I first saw Madeline Lester. Even with that first time a sudden and heavenly light seemed to dawn upon me. Her face—its still, its serene, its touching beauty—shone down on my desolation like a dream of mercy—like a hope of pardon. My heart warmed as I beheld it, my pulse woke from its even slowness. I was young once more. Young ! the youth, the freshness, the ardour—not of

the frame only, but of the soul. But I then only saw or spoke to her—scarce knew her—not loved her—nor was it often that we met. The south wind stirred the dark waters of my mind, but it passed, and all became hushed again. It was not for two years from the time we first saw each other that accident brought us closely together. I pass over the rest. We loved! Yet, oh, what struggles were mine during the progress of that love! How unnatural did it seem to me to yield to a passion that united me with my kind; and, as I loved her more, how far more torturing grew my fear of the future! That which had almost slept before awoke again to terrible life. The soil that covered the past might be riven, the dead awake, and that ghastly chasm separate me for ever from HER. What a doom, too, might I bring upon that breast which had begun so confidently to love me! Often—often I resolved to fly—to forsake her—to seek some desert spot in the distant parts of the world, and never to be betrayed again into human emotions! But as the bird flutters in the net, as the hare doubles from its pursuers, I did but wrestle, I did but trifle with an irresistible doom. Mark how strange are the coincidences of Fate—Fate, that gives us warnings, and takes away the power to obey them—the idle prophetess, the juggling fiend! On the same evening that brought me acquainted with Madeline Lester, Houseman, led by schemes of fraud and violence into that part of the country, discovered and sought me! Imagine my feelings when, in the hush of night, I opened the door of my lonely home to his summons,

and, by the light of that moon which had witnessed so never-to-be-forgotten a companionship between us, beheld my accomplice in murder after the lapse of so many years. Time and a course of vice had changed, and hardened, and lowered his nature ; and in the power, at the will, of that nature, I beheld myself abruptly placed. He passed that night under my roof. He was poor. I gave him what was in my hands. He promised to leave that part of England—to seek me no more.

“The next day I could not bear my own thoughts ; the revulsion was too sudden, too full of turbulent, fierce, torturing emotions : I fled for a short relief to the house to which Madeline’s father had invited me. But in vain I sought, by wine, by converse, by human voices, human kindness, to fly the ghost that had been raised from the grave of time. I soon returned to my own thoughts. I resolved to wrap myself once more in the solitude of my heart. But let me not repeat what I have said before, somewhat prematurely, in my narrative. I resolved—I struggled in vain : Fate had ordained that the sweet life of Madeline Lester should wither beneath the poison tree of mine. Houseman sought me again ; and now came on the humbling part of crime, its low calculations, its poor defence, its paltry trickery, its mean hypocrisy ! They made my chiefest penance ! I was to evade, to beguile, to buy into silence, this rude and despised ruffian. No matter now to repeat how this task was fulfilled : I surrendered nearly my all on the condition of his leaving England

for ever : not till I thought that condition already fulfilled, till the day had passed on which he should have left England, did I consent to allow Madeline's fate to be irrevocably woven with mine.

“How often, when the soul sins, are her loftiest feelings punished through her lowest ! To me, lone, rapt, for ever on the wing to unearthly speculation, galling and humbling was it indeed to be suddenly called from the eminence of thought, to barter, in pounds and pence, for life, and with one like Houseman ! These are the curses that deepen the tragedy of life, by grinding down our pride. But I wander back to what I have before said. I was to marry Madeline—I was once more poor, but want did not rise before me ; I had succeeded in obtaining the promise of a competence from one whom you know. For that which I had once sought to force from my kind, I asked now ; not with the spirit of the beggar, but of the just claimant, and in that spirit it was granted. And now I was really happy ; Houseman I believed removed for ever from my path ! Madeline was about to be mine : I surrendered myself to love, and, blind and deluded, I wandered on, and awoke on the brink of that precipice into which I am about to plunge. You know the rest. But oh ! what now was my horror ! It had not been a mere worthless, isolated unit in creation that I had seen blotted out of the sum of life. The murder done in my presence, and of which law would deem me the accomplice, had been done upon the brother of him whose child was my betrothed ! Mysterious avenger—

relentless Fate ! How, when I deemed myself the farthest from her, had I been sinking into her grasp ! How incalculable—how measureless—how viewless the consequences of one crime, even when we think we have weighed them all with scales that would have turned with a hair's weight ! Hear me—as the voice of a man who is on the brink of a world, the awful nature of which reason cannot pierce—hear me ! When your heart tempts to some wandering from the line allotted to the rest of men, and whispers, 'This may be crime in others, but is not so in thee ; or, it is but one misdeed, it shall entail no other,'—tremble—cling fast, fast to the path you are lured to leave. Remember me !

“ But in this state of mind I was yet forced to play the hypocrite. Had I been alone in the world—had Madeline and Lester not been to me what they were, I might have disproved the charge of fellowship in murder—I might have wrung from the pale lips of Houseman the actual truth ; but though I might clear myself as the murderer, I must condemn myself as the robber, and in avowal of that lesser guilt, though I might have lessened the abhorrence of others, I should have inflicted a blow, worse than that of my death itself, on the hearts of those who deemed me sinless as themselves. *Their* eyes were on me ; *their* lives were set on my complete acquittal, less even of life than honour ; my struggle against truth was less for myself than them. My defence fulfilled its end : Madeline died without distrusting the innocence of him she loved. Lester, unless you betray me, will die in the

same belief. In truth, since the arts of hypocrisy have *been* commenced, the pride of consistency would have made it sweet to me to leave the world in a like error, or at least in doubt. For you I conquer that desire, the proud man's last frailty. And now my tale is done. From what passes at this instant within my heart, I lift not the veil! Whether beneath be despair, or hope, or fiery emotions, or one settled and ominous calm, matters not. My last hours shall not belie my life; on the verge of death I will not play the dastard, and tremble at the Dim Unknown. Perhaps I am not without hope that the Great and Unseen Spirit, whose emanation within me I have nursed and worshipped, though erringly and in vain, may see in his fallen creature one bewildered by his reason rather than yielding to his vices. The guide I received from heaven betrayed me, and I was lost; but I have not plunged wittingly from crime to crime. Against one guilty deed, some good and much suffering may be set; and, dim and afar off from my allotted bourne, I may behold in her glorious home the face of her who taught me to love, and who, even there, could scarce be blessed without shedding the light of her divine forgiveness upon me. Enough! ere you break this seal, my doom rests not with man nor earth. The burning desires I have known—the resplendent visions I have nursed—the sublime aspirings that have lifted me so often from sense and clay,—these tell me that, whether for good or ill, I am the thing of an Immortality and the creature of a God! As men of the old

wisdom drew their garments around their face, and sat down collectedly to die, I wrap myself in the settled resignation of a soul firm to the last, and taking not from man's vengeance even the method of its dismissal. The courses of my life I swayed with my own hand ; from my own hand shall come the manner and moment of my death !

“ EUGENE ARAM.

“ *August 1759.*”

On the day after that evening in which Aram had given the above confession to Walter Lester—on the day of execution, when they entered the condemned cell, they found the prisoner lying on the bed ; and when they approached to take off the irons, they found that he neither stirred nor answered to their call. They attempted to raise him, and he then uttered some words in a faint voice. They perceived that he was covered with blood. He had opened his veins in two places in the arm with a sharp instrument which he had contrived to conceal. A surgeon was instantly sent for, and by the customary applications, the prisoner, in some measure, was brought to himself. Resolved not to defraud the law of its victim, they bore him, though he appeared unconscious to all around, to the fatal spot. But when he arrived at that dread place, his sense suddenly seemed to return. He looked hastily round the throng that swayed and murmured below, and a faint flush rose to his cheek : he cast his eyes impatiently above, and breathed hard

and convulsively. The dire preparations were made, completed ; but the prisoner drew back for an instant — was it from mortal fear ? He motioned to the clergyman to approach, as if about to whisper some last request in his ear. The clergyman bowed his head — there was a minute's awful pause — Aram seemed to struggle as for words, when, suddenly throwing himself back, a bright triumphant smile flashed over his whole face. With that smile the haughty spirit passed away, and the law's last indignity was wreaked upon a breathless corpse !

CHAPTER VIII.

AND LAST.

The Traveller's Return.—The Country Village once more visited.
—Its Inhabitants.—The Remembered Brook.—The Deserted
Manor-house.—The Churchyard.—The Traveller resumes his
Journey.—The Country Town.—A Meeting of Two Lovers after
long Absence and much Sorrow.—Conclusion.

The lopped tree in time may grow again,
Most naked plants renew both fruit and flower;
The sorriest wight may find release from pain,
The driest soil suck in some moistening shower:
Time goes by turns, and chances change by course
From foul to fair.—ROBERT SOUTHWELL.

SOMETIMES, towards the end of a gloomy day, the sun, before but dimly visible, breaks suddenly out, and where before you had noticed only the sterner outline of the mountains, you turn with relief to the lowlier features of the vale. So, in this record of crime and sorrow, the ray that breaks forth at the close, brings into gentle light the shapes which the earlier darkness had obscured.

It was some years after the date of the last event we have recorded, and it was a fine warm noon in the happy month of May, when a horseman rode slowly through the long, straggling village of Grassdale. He

was a man, though in the prime of youth (for he might yet want some two years of thirty), who bore the steady and earnest air of one who has wrestled the world: his eye keen but tranquil; his sunburnt though handsome features, which thought or care had despoiled of the roundness of their early contour, leaving the cheek somewhat sunken and the lines somewhat marked, were characterised by a grave, and at that moment by a melancholy and soft expression; and now, as his horse proceeded slowly through the green lane, which at every vista gave glimpses of rich verdant valleys, the sparkling river, or the orchard ripe with the fragrant blossoms of spring, his head drooped upon his breast, and the tears started to his eyes. The dress of the horseman was of foreign fashion, and at that day, when the garb still denoted the calling, sufficiently military to show the profession he had belonged to. And well did the garb become the short dark moustache, the sinewy chest, and length of limb of the young horseman: recommendations, the two latter, not despised in the court of the great Frederic of Prussia, in whose service he had borne arms. He had commenced his career in that battle terminating in the signal defeat of the bold Daun, when the fortunes of that gallant general paled at last before the star of the greatest of modern kings. The peace of 1763 had left Prussia in the quiet enjoyment of the glory she had obtained, and the young Englishman took the advantage it afforded him of seeing, as a traveller, not despoiler, the rest of Europe.

The adventure and the excitement of travel pleased, and left him even now uncertain whether or not his present return to England would be for long. He had not been a week returned, and to this part of his native country he had hastened at once.

He checked his horse as he now passed the memorable sign that yet swung before the door of Peter Dealtry; and there, under the shade of the broad tree, now budding into all its tenderest verdure, a pedestrian wayfarer sat, enjoying the rest and coolness of his shelter. Our horseman cast a look at the open door, across which, in the bustle of housewifery, female forms now and then glanced and vanished, and presently he saw Peter himself saunter forth to chat with the traveller beneath his tree. And Peter Dealtry was the same as ever, only he seemed, perhaps, shorter and thinner than of old, as if Time did not so much break as gradually wear away mine host's slender person.

The horseman gazed for a moment, but, observing Peter return the gaze, he turned aside his head, and, putting his horse into a canter, soon passed out of cognisance of the "Spotted Dog."

He now came in sight of the neat white cottage of the old corporal; and there, leaning over the pale, a crutch under one arm, and his friendly pipe in one corner of his shrewd mouth, was the corporal himself. Perched upon the railing, in a semi-dose, the ears down, the eyes closed, sat a large brown cat: poor Jacobina, it was not thyself! death spares neither

cat nor king ; but thy virtues lived in thy grandchild ; and thy grandchild (as age brings dotage) was loved even more than thee by the worthy corporal. Long may thy race flourish ! for at this day it is not extinct. Nature rarely inflicts barrenness on the feline tribe ; they are essentially made for love, and love's soft cares ; and a cat's lineage outlives the lineage of kaisars !

At the sound of hoofs, the corporal turned his head, and he looked long and wistfully at the horseman, as, relaxing his horse's pace into a walk, our traveller rode slowly on.

"'Fore George," muttered the corporal, "a fine man—a very fine man : 'bout my inches—augh !"

A smile, but a very faint smile, crossed the lip of the horseman as he gazed on the figure of the stalwart corporal.

"He eyes me hard," thought he ; "yet he does not seem to remember me. I must be greatly changed. 'Tis fortunate, however, that I am not recognised : fain, indeed, at this time, would I come and go unnoticed and alone."

The horseman fell into a reverie, which was broken by the murmur of the sunny rivulet, fretting over each little obstacle it met—the happy and spoiled child of Nature ! That murmur rang on the horseman's ear like a voice from his boyhood ; how familiar was it, how dear ! No haunting tone of music ever recalled so rushing a host of memories and associations as that simple, restless, everlasting sound ! Everlasting !—

all had changed—the trees had sprung up or decayed—some cottages around were ruins—some new and unfamiliar ones supplied their place; and on the stranger himself—on all those whom the sound recalled to his heart—Time had been, indeed, at work; but, with the same exulting bound and happy voice, that little brook leaped along its way. Ages hence, may the course be as glad and the murmur as full of mirth! They are blessed things, those remote and unchanging streams!—they fill us with the same love as if they were living creatures!—and in a green corner of the world there is one that, for my part, I never see without forgetting myself to tears—tears that I would not lose for a king's ransom; tears that no other sight or sound could call from their source; tears of what affection, what soft regret; tears through the soft mists of which I behold what I have lost on earth and hope to regain in heaven!

The traveller, after a brief pause, continued his road; and now he came full upon the old manor-house. The weeds were grown up in the garden, the mossed paling was broken in many places; the house itself was shut up, and the sun glanced on the deepsunk casements, without finding its way into the desolate interior. High above the old hospitable gate hung a board, announcing that the house was for sale, and referring the curious or the speculating to the attorney of the neighbouring town. The horseman sighed heavily, and muttered to himself; then, turning up the road that led to the back entrance, he came into the courtyard,

and, leading his horse into an empty stable, he proceeded on foot through the dismantled premises, pausing with every moment, and holding a sad and ever-changing commune with himself. An old woman, a stranger to him, was the sole inmate of the house; and imagining he came to buy, or at least examine, she conducted him through the house, pointing out its advantages, and lamenting its dilapidated state. Our traveller scarcely heard her; but when he came to one room, which he would not enter till the last (it was the little parlour in which the once happy family had been wont to sit), he sank down in the chair that had been Lester's honoured seat, and, covering his face with his hands, did not move or look up for several moments. The old woman gazed at him with surprise.—“Perhaps, sir, you knew the family?—they were greatly beloved.”

The traveller did not answer; but when he rose, he muttered to himself,—“No; the experiment is made in vain! Never, never could I live here again—it must be so—the house of my forefathers *must* pass into a stranger's hands.” With this reflection he hurried from the house, and, re-entering the garden, turned through a little gate that swung half open on its shattered hinges, and led into the green and quiet sanctuaries of the dead. The same touching character of deep and undisturbed repose that hallows the country churchyard—and that one more than most—yet brooded there, as when, years ago, it woke his young mind to reflection, then unmingled with regret.

He passed over the rude mounds of earth that covered the deceased poor, and paused at a tomb of higher, though but of simple pretensions ; it was not yet discoloured by the dews and seasons, and the short inscription traced upon it was strikingly legible in comparison with those around:—

ROWLAND LESTER,

Obiit 1760, æt. 64.

Blessed are they that mourn, for they
shall be comforted.

By that tomb the traveller remained in undisturbed contemplation for some time ; and when he turned, all the swarthy colour had died from his cheek, his eyes were dim, and the wonted pride of a young man's step and a soldier's bearing was gone from his mien.

As he looked up, his eye caught afar, imbedded among the soft verdure of the spring, one lone and grey house, from whose chimney there arose no smoke—sad, inhospitable, dismantled as that beside which he now stood ;—as if the curse which had fallen on the inmates of either mansion still clung to either roof. One hasty glance only the traveller gave to the solitary and distant abode,—and then started and quickened his pace.

On re-entering the stables, the traveller found the corporal examining his horse from head to foot with great care and attention.

“Good hoofs, too, humph!” quoth the corporal, as

he released the front leg; and, turning round, saw, with some little confusion, the owner of the steed he had been honouring with so minute a survey. "Oh— augh! looking at the beastie, sir, lest it might have cast a shoe. Thought your honour might want some intelligent person to show you the premises, if so be you have come to buy; nothing but an old 'oman there; dare say your honour does not like old 'omen— augh!"

"The owner is not in these parts?" said the horseman.

"No, over seas, sir; a fine young gentleman, but hasty; and—and—but Lord bless me! sure—no, it can't be—yes, now you turn—it is—it is my young master!" So saying, the corporal, roused into affection, hobbled up to the wanderer, and seized and kissed his hand. "Ah, sir, we shall be glad indeed to see you back after such doings. But all's forgotten now and gone by— augh! Poor Miss Ellinor, how happy she'll be to see your honour. Ah! how she be changed, surely!"

"Changed; ay, I make no doubt! What? does she look in weak health?"

"No; as to that, your honour, she be winsome enough still," quoth the corporal, smacking his lips; "I seed her the week afore last, when I went over to —, for I suppose you knows as she lives there, all alone like, in a small house, with a green rail afore it, and a brass knocker on the door, at top of the town, with a fine view of the — hills in front? Well, sir, I

seed her, and mighty handsome she looked, though a little thinner than she was ; but for all that, she be greatly changed."

"How ! for the worse ?"

"For the worse, indeed," answered the corporal, assuming an air of melancholy and grave significance ; "she be grown so religious, sir, think of that—augh—bother—whaugh !"

"Is that all ?" said Walter, relieved, and with a slight smile. "And she lives alone ?"

"Quite, poor young lady, as if she had made up her mind to be an old maid ; though I know as how she refused Squire Knyvett of the Grange ;—waiting for your honour's return, mayhap !"

"Lead out the horse, Bunting ; but stay, I am sorry to see you with a crutch ; what's the cause ? no accident, I trust ?"

"Merely rheumatics—will attack the youngest of us ; never been quite myself since I went a-travelling with your honour—augh !—without going to Lunnun arter all. But I shall be stronger next year, I dare to say !"

"I hope you will, Bunting. And Miss Lester lives alone, you say ?"

"Ay ; and for all she be so religious, the poor about do bless her very footsteps. She does a power of good ; she gave *me* half a guinea last Tuesday fortnight ; an excellent young lady, so sensible like !"

"Thank you ; I can tighten the girths !—so !—there, Bunting,—there's something for old companionship's sake."

“Thank your honour ; you be too good, always was—baugh ! But I hopes your honour be a-coming to live here now ; ’twill make things smile again !”

“No, Bunting, I fear not,” said Walter, spurring through the gates of the yard.—“Good-day.”

“Augh, then,” cried the corporal, hobbling breathlessly after him, “if so be as I shan’t see your honour agin, at which I am extramely consarned, will your honour recollect your promise touching the ’tato ground ? The steward, Master Bailey, ’od rot him ! has clean forgot it—augh !”

“The same old man, Bunting, eh ? Well, make your mind easy ; it shall be done.”

“Lord bless your honour’s good heart ; thank ye ; and—and”—laying his hand on the bridle—“your honour *did* say the bit cot should be rent-free ? You see, your honour,” quoth the corporal, drawing up with a grave smile, “I may marry some day or other, and have a large family ; and the rent won’t set so easy then—augh !”

“Let go the rein, Bunting—and consider your house rent-free.”

“And your honour—and——”

But Walter was already in a brisk trot ; and the remaining petitions of the corporal died in empty air.

“A good day’s work, too,” muttered Jacob, hobbling homeward. “What a green un ’tis still ! Never be a man of the world—augh !”

For two hours Walter did not relax the rapidity of his pace ; and when he did so at the descent of a steep

hill, a small country town lay before him, the sun glittering on its single spire, and lighting up the long, clean, centre street, with the good old-fashioned garden stretching behind each house, and detached cottages around, peeping forth here and there from the blossoms and verdure of the young May. He rode into the yard of the principal inn, and, putting up his horse, inquired, in a tone that he persuaded himself was the tone of indifference, for Miss Lester's house.

"John," said the landlady (landlord there was none), summoning a little boy of about ten years old—"run on and show this gentleman the good lady's house; and—stay—his honour will excuse you a moment—just take up the nosegay you cut for her this morning: she loves flowers. Ah, sir! an excellent young lady is Miss Lester," continued the hostess, as the boy ran back for the nosegay: "so charitable, so kind, so meek to all. Adversity, they say, softens some characters; but she must always have been good. Well, God bless her! and that every one must say. My boy John, sir,—he is not eleven yet, come next August—a 'cute boy, calls her the good lady: we now always call her so here. Come, John, that's right. You stay to dine here, sir? Shall I put down a chicken?"

At the farther extremity of the town stood Miss Lester's dwelling. It was the house in which her father had spent his last days; and there she had continued to reside, when left by his death to a small competence, which Walter, then abroad, had persuaded her (for her pride was of the right kind) to suffer him, though but

slightly, to increase. It was a detached and small building, standing a little from the road ; and Walter paused for some moments at the garden-gate, and gazed round him before he followed his young guide, who, tripping lightly up the gravel-walk to the door, rang the bell, and inquired if Miss Lester was within.

Walter was left for some moments alone in a little parlour : he required those moments to recover himself from the past, that rushed sweepingly over him. And was it—yes, it was Ellinor that now stood before him ! —Changed she was, indeed ; the slight girl had budded into woman ; changed she was, indeed ; the bound had for ever left that step, once so elastic with hope ; the vivacity of the quick, dark eye was soft and quiet ; the rich colour had given place to a hue fainter, though not less lovely. But to repeat in verse what is poorly bodied forth in prose—

“ And years had passed, and thus they met again.
The wind had swept along the flower since then.
O'er her fair cheek a paler lustre spread,
As if the white rose triumph'd o'er the red.
No more she walked exulting on the air,
Light though her step, there was a languor there.
No more—her spirit bursting from its bound—
She stood, like Hebe, scattering smiles around.”

“ Ellinor ! ” said Walter, mournfully—“ thank God ! we meet at last.”

“ That voice—that face—my cousin—my dear, dear Walter ! ”

All reserve, all consciousness fled in the delight of that moment ; and Ellinor leaned her head upon his

shoulder, and scarcely felt the kiss that he pressed upon her lips.

“And so long absent!” said Ellinor, reproachfully.

“But did you not tell me that the blow that had fallen on our house had stricken from you all thoughts of love—had divided us for ever? And what, Ellinor, was England or home without you?”

“Ah!” said Ellinor, recovering herself, and a deep paleness succeeding to the warm and delighted flush that had been conjured to her cheek, “do not revive the past; I have sought for years—long, solitary, desolate years—to escape from its dark recollections!”

“You speak wisely, dearest Ellinor; let us assist each other in doing so. We are alone in the world—let us unite our lots. Never, through all I have seen and felt—in the starry night-watch of camps—in the blaze of courts—by the sunny groves of Italy—in the deep forests of the Hartz—never have I forgotten you, my sweet and dear cousin. Your image has linked itself indissolubly with all I conceived of home and happiness, and a tranquil and peaceful future; and now I return, and see you and find you changed—but oh, how lovely! Ah, let us not part again! A consoler, a guide, a soother, father, brother, husband—all this my heart whispers I could be to you!”

Ellinor turned away her face, but her heart was very full. The solitary years that had passed over her since they last met rose up before her. The only living image that had mingled through those years with the

dreams of the departed was his who now knelt at her feet—her sole friend, her sole relative, her first—her last love ! Of all the world, he was the only one with whom she could recur to the past ; on whom she might repose her bruised but still unconquered affections. And Walter knew by that blush, that sigh, that tear, that he was remembered—that he was beloved—that his cousin was his own at last !

“ But before you end,” said my friend, to whom I showed the above pages, originally concluding my tale with the last sentence, “ you must—it is a comfortable and orthodox old fashion—tell us a little about the fate of the other persons to whom you have introduced us :—the wretch Houseman ? ”

“ True ; in the mysterious course of mortal affairs, the greater villain had escaped, the more generous fallen. But though Houseman died without violence—died in his bed, as honest men die—we can scarcely believe that his life was not punishment enough. He lived in strict seclusion—the seclusion of poverty, and maintained himself by dressing flax. His life was several times attempted by the mob, for he was an object of universal execration and horror ; and even ten years afterwards, when he died, his body was buried in secret at the dead of night—for the hatred of the world survived him ! ”

“ And the corporal, did he marry in his old age ? ”

“ History telleth of *one* Jacob Bunting, whose wife, several years younger than himself, played him certain

sorry pranks with a rakish squire in the neighbourhood: the said Jacob knowing nothing thereof, but furnishing great oblectation unto his neighbours by boasting that he turned an excellent penny by selling poultry to his honour above market prices—‘ For Bessy, my girl, I’m a man of the world—augh ! ’ ”

“ Contented ! a suitable fate for the old dog.—But Peter Dealtry ? ”

“ Of Peter Dealtry know we nothing more, save that we have seen at Grassdale churchyard a small tombstone inscribed to his memory, with the following sacred posy thereto appended :—

‘ We flourish, saith the holy text,
One hour, and are cut down the next :
I was like grass but yesterday,
But Death has mowed me into hay.’ * ”

“ And his namesake, Sir Peter Grindlescrew Hales ? ”

“ Went through a long life, honoured and respected, but met with domestic misfortunes in old age. His eldest son married a servant-maid, and his youngest daughter——”

“ Eloped with the groom ? ”

“ By no means ; with a young spendthrift—the very picture of what Sir Peter was in his youth. They were both struck out of their father’s will, and Sir Peter died in the arms of his eight remaining children, seven of whom never forgave his memory for not being the eighth—viz. chief heir.”

* Verbatim.

“And his contemporary, John Courtland, the non-hypochondriac?”

“Died of sudden suffocation, as he was crossing Hounslow Heath.”

“But Lord ——?”

“Lived to a great age: his last days, owing to growing infirmities, were spent out of the world; every one pitied him—it was the happiest time of his life!”

“Dame Darkmans?”

“Was found dead in her bed; from over-fatigue, it was supposed, in making merry at the funeral of a young girl on the previous day.”

“Well!—hem,—and so Walter and his cousin were really married! And did they never return to the old manor-house?”

“No; the memory that is allied only to melancholy grows sweet with years, and hallows the spot which it haunts; not so the memory allied to dread, terror, and something too of shame. Walter sold the property with some pangs of natural regret; after his marriage with Ellinor, he returned abroad for some time; but finally settling in England, engaged in active life, and left to his posterity a name they still honour, and to his country the memory of some services that will not lightly pass away.

“But one dread and gloomy remembrance never forsook his mind, and exercised the most powerful influence over the actions and motives of his life. In every emergency, in every temptation, there rose to his eyes

the fate of him so gifted, so noble in much, so formed for greatness in all things, blasted by one crime—a crime the offspring of bewildered reasonings—all the while speculating upon virtue. And that fate, revealing the darker secrets of our kind, in which the true science of morals is chiefly found, taught him the twofold lesson,—caution for himself and charity for others. He knew henceforth that even the criminal is not all evil; the angel within us is not easily expelled; it survives sin, ay, and many sins, and leaves us sometimes in amaze and marvel at the good that lingers round the heart even of the hardest offender.

“And Ellinor clung with more than revived affection to one with whose lot she was now allied. Walter was her last tie upon earth, and in him she learned, day by day, more lavishly to treasure up her heart. Adversity and trial had ennobled the character of both; and she who had so long seen in her cousin all she could love, beheld now in her husband all that she could venerate and admire. A certain religious fervour, in which, after the calamities of her family, she had indulged, continued with her to the last; but (softened by human ties, and the reciprocation of earthly duties and affections) it was fortunately preserved either from the undue enthusiasm or the undue austerity into which it would otherwise, in all likelihood, have merged. What remained, however, uniting her most cheerful thoughts with something serious, and the happiest moments of the present with the dim and solemn fore-

cast of the future, elevated her nature, not depressed, and made itself visible rather in tender than in sombre hues. And it was sweet, when the thought of Madeline and her father came across her, to recur at once for consolation to that heaven in which she believed their tears were dried, and their past sorrows but a forgotten dream! There is, indeed, a time of life when these reflections make our chief, though a melancholy, pleasure. As we grow older, and sometimes a hope, sometimes a friend, vanishes from our path, the thought of an immortality *will* press itself forcibly upon us! and there, by little and little, as the ant piles grain after grain the garnerers of a future sustenance, we learn to carry our hopes, and harvest, as it were, our wishes.

“Our cousins, then, were happy. Happy, for they loved one another entirely; and on those who do so love, I sometimes think that, barring physical pain and extreme poverty, the ills of life fall with but idle malice. Yes, they were happy, in spite of the past and in defiance of the future.”

“I am satisfied, then,” said my friend,—“and your tale is fairly done!”

And now, reader, farewell! If sometimes, as thou hast gone with me to this our parting spot, thou hast suffered thy companion to win the mastery over thine interest, to flash now on thy convictions, to touch now

thy heart, to guide thy hope, to excite thy terror, to gain, it may be, to the sources of thy tears—then is there a tie between thee and me which cannot readily be broken! And when thou hearest the malice that wrongs affect the candour which should judge, shall he not find in thy sympathies the defence, or in thy charity the indulgence,—of a friend?

END OF EUGENE ARAM.

In the preface to this Novel it was stated that the original intention of its Author was to compose, upon the facts of Aram's gloomy history, a tragedy instead of a romance. It may now be not altogether without interest for the reader, if I submit to his indulgence the rough outline of the earlier scenes in the fragment of a drama, which, in all probability, will never be finished. So far as I have gone, the construction of the tragedy differs, in some respects, materially from that of the tale, although the whole of what is now presented to the reader must be considered merely as a copy from the first hasty sketch of an uncompleted design.

NOVEMBER 1833.

EUGENE ARAM:

A Tragedy.



ACT I. SCENE I.

Aram's Apartment—Books, Maps, and Scientific Instruments scattered around. In everything else the appearance of the greatest poverty.

1ST CREDITOR (*behind the scenes*). I must be paid. Three moons have flitted since
You pledged your word to me.

2D CRED. And me!

3D CRED. And me!

ARAM (*entering*). Away, I tell ye! Will ye rend my garb?

Away! to-morrow.—*Gentle* sirs, to-morrow.

1ST CRED. This is your constant word.

2D CRED. We'll wait no more.

ARAM. Ye'll wait no more? Enough! be seated, sirs,
Pray ye, be seated. Well! with searching eyes
Ye do survey these walls! Contain they aught—
Nay, take your leisure—to annul your claims?

(*Turning to 1st Cred.*) See, sir, yon books—they're yours,
if you but tear

That fragment of spoiled paper—be not backward,

I give them with goodwill. This one is Greek ;
 A golden work, sweet sir—a golden work ;
 It teaches us to bear—what I have borne!—
 And to forbear men's ills, as you have done.

1ST CRED. You mock me. Well——

ARAM. Mock! mock! Alas! my friend,
 Do rags indulge in jesting? Fie, sir, fie!

(*Turning to 2d Cred.*) You will not wrong me so? On
 your receipt

Take this round orb ; it miniatures the world,—
 And in its study I forgot the world!

Take this, yon table ;—a poor scholar's fare
 Needs no such proud support:—yon bed, too! (Sleep
 Is Night's sweet angel, leading fallen Man
 Thro' yielding airs to Youth's lost paradise ;
 But Sleep and I have quarrell'd) ; take it, sir!

2D CRED. (*muttering to the others*). Come, we must
 leave him to the law, or famine.

You see his goods were costly at a groat!

1ST CRED. Well, henceforth I will grow more wise!

'Tis said

Learning is better than a house or lands.

Let me be modest! Learning shall go free ;

Give me security in house and lands.

3D CRED. (*lingering after the other two depart, offers
 a piece of money to Aram*). There, man ; I came to
 menace you with law

And jails. You're poorer than I thought you!—there——

ARAM (*looking at the money*). What! and a beggar,
 too! 'Tis mighty well.

Good sir, I'm grateful—I will *not* refuse you:

'Twill win back Plato from the crabbed hands

Of him who lends on all things. Thank you, sir ;

Plato and I will thank you.

3D CRED.

Crazed, poor scholar!

I'll take my little one from school this day!

SCENE II.

ARAM. Rogues thrive in ease ; and fools grow rich with
toil ;
Wealth's wanton eye on Wisdom coldly dwells,
And turns to dote upon the green youth, Folly.
O life, vile life, with what soul-lavish love
We cling to thee—when all thy charms are fled.
Yea, the more foul thy withering aspect grows,
The steadier burns our passion to possess thee.
To die: ay, there's the cure—the plashing stream
That girds these walls—the drug of the dank weeds
That rot the air below ; these hoard the balm
For broken, pining, and indignant hearts.
But the witch Hope forbids me to be wise ;
And, when I turn to these, Woe's only friends—[*Pointing
to his books*].
And with their weird and eloquent voices soothe
The lulled Babel of the world within,
I can but dream that my vexed years at last
Shall find the quiet of a hermit's cell,
And, far from men's rude malice or low scorn,
Beneath the loved gaze of the lambent stars,
And with the hollow rocks, and sparry caves,
And mystic waves, and music-murmuring winds—
My oracles and co-mates—watch my life
Glide down the stream of knowledge, and behold
Its waters with a musing stillness glass
The smiles of Nature and the eyes of Heaven !

SCENE III.

*Enter BOTELER, slowly watching him ; as he remains silent and
in thought, BOTELER touches him on the shoulder.*

BOTELER. How now ! what ! gloomy ? and the day so
bright !

Why, the old dog that guards the court below
 Hath crept from out his wooden den, and shakes
 His grey hide in the fresh and merry air ;
 Tuning his sullen and suspicious bark
 Into a whine of welcome as I pass'd.
 Come, rouse thee, Aram ; let us forth.

ARAM.

Nay, friend,

My spirit lackeys not the moody skies,
 Nor changes—bright or darkling—with their change.
 Farewell, good neighbour ; I must work this day ;—
 Behold my tools—and scholars toil alone !

BOTELER. Tush ! a few minutes wasted upon me
 May well be spared from this long summer day.
 Hast heard the news ? Monson ?—thou know'st the man ?

ARAM. I do remember. *He was poor.* I knew him.

BOTELER. But he is poor no more. The all-changing wheel
 Roll'd round, and scatter'd riches on his hearth.
 A distant kinsman, while he lived, a niggard,
 Generous in death, hath left his grateful heir
 In our good neighbour. Why, you seem not glad ;
 Does it not please you ?

ARAM.

Yes.

BOTELER. And so it should ;
 'Tis a poor fool, but honest. Had Dame Fate
 Done this for you—for me :—'tis true, our brains
 Had taught us better how to spend the dross ;
 But earth hath worse men than our neighbour.

ARAM.

Ay,

“Worse men !” it may be so !

BOTELER.

Would I were rich !

What loyal service, what complacent friendship,
 What gracious love upon the lips of Beauty,
 Bloom into life beneath the beams of gold.
 Venus and Bacchus, the bright Care-dispellers,
 Are never seen but in the train of Fortune.
 Would I were rich !

ARAM. Shame on thy low ambition!
 Would *I* were rich too ;—but for other aims.
 Oh! what a glorious and time-hallow'd world
 Would I invoke around me: and wall in
 A haunted solitude with those bright souls,
 That, with a still and warning aspect, gaze
 Upon us from the hallowing shroud of books!
 By Heaven, there should not be a seer who left
 The world one doctrine, but I'd task his lore,
 And commune with his spirit! All the truths
 Of all the tongues of earth—I'd have them *all*,
 Had I the golden spell to raise their ghosts!
 I'd build me domes, too; from whose giddy height
 My soul would watch the night stars, and unsphere
 The destinies of man, or track the ways
 Of God from world to world; pursue the winds,
 The clouds that womb the thunder—to their home;
 Invoke and conquer Nature,—share her throne
 On earth, and ocean, and the chainless air;
 And on the Titan fabrics of old truths
 Raise the bold spirit to a height with heaven!
 Would—would my life might boast one year of wealth,
 Though death should bound it!

BOTELER. Thou mayst have thy wish!

ARAM (*rapt and abstractedly*). Who spoke? Methought

I heard my genius say—

My evil genius—"Thou mayst have thy wish!"

BOTELER. Thou heardst aright! Monson this eve will
 pass

By Nid's swift wave; he bears his gold with him;

The spot is lone—untenanted—remote;

And if thou hast but courage,—one bold deed,

And one short moment—thou art poor no more!

ARAM (*after a pause, turning his eyes slowly on Boteler*).

Boteler, was that thy voice?

BOTELER. How couldst thou doubt it?

ARAM. Methought its tone seem'd changed; and now
methinks—

Now, that I look upon thy face—my eyes
Discover not its old familiar aspect.

Thou'rt very sure thy name is Boteler?

BOTELER.

Pshaw,

Thou'rt dreaming still:—awake, and let thy mind
And heart drink all I breathe into thy ear.

I know thee, Aram, for a man humane,
Gentle and musing; but withal of stuff

That might have made a warrior; and desires,
Though of a subtler nature than my own,

As high, and hard to limit. Care and want

Have made thee what they made thy friend long since.

And when I wound my heart to a resolve,

Dangerous, but fraught with profit, I did fix

On thee as one whom Fate and Nature made

A worthy partner in the nameless deed.

ARAM. Go on. I pray thee pause not.

BOTELER.

There remain

Few words to body forth my full design.

Know that—at my advice—this eve the gull'd

And credulous fool of Fortune quits his home.

Say but one word, and thou shalt share with me

The gold he bears about him.

ARAM.

At what price?

BOTELER. A little courage.

ARAM.

And my soul!—No more

I see your project—

BOTELER.

And embrace it?

ARAM.

Lo!

How many deathful, dread, and ghastly snares

Encompass him whom the stark hunger gnaws,

And the grim demon Penury shuts from out

The golden Eden of his bright desires!

To-day I thought to slay myself, and die,

No single hope once won!—and now I hear
 Dark words of blood, and quail not, nor recoil.—
 'Tis but a death in either case ;—or mine
 Or that poor dotard's!—And the guilt—the guilt,—
 Why, *what* is guilt?—A word! We are the tools,
 From birth to death, of Destiny: and shaped,
 For sin or virtue, by the iron force
 Of the unseen, but unresisted, hands
 Of Fate, the august compeller of the world.

BOTELER (*aside*). It works. Behold the devil at all
 hearts!

I am a soldier, and inured to blood ;
 But *he* hath lived with moralists forsooth.
 And yet one word to tempt him, and one sting
 Of the food-craving clay, and the meek sage
 Grasps at the crime he shuddered at before.

ARAM (*abruptly*). Thou hast broke thy fast this morn-
 ing ?

BOTELER.

Ay, in truth.

ARAM. But *I* have not since yestermorn, and ask'd
 In the belief that certain thoughts unwont
 To blacken the still mirror of my mind
 Might be the phantoms of the sickening flesh
 And the faint nature. I was wrong ; since you
 Share the same thoughts, nor suffer the same ills.

BOTELER. Indeed, I knew not this. Come to my roof :
 'Tis poor, but not so bare as to deny
 A soldier's viands to a scholar's wants.
 Come, and we'll talk this over. I perceive
 That your bold heart already is prepared,
 And the details alone remain.—Come, friend,
 Lean upon me, for you seem weak ; the air
 Will breathe this languor into health.

ARAM.

Your hearth

Is widow'd,—we shall be alone ?

BOTELER.

Alone.

ARAM. Come, then ;—the private way. We'll shun the crowd :
I do not love the insolent eyes of men.

SCENE IV.

(*Night—a wild and gloomy Forest—the River at a distance.*)

Enter ARAM slowly.

ARAM. Were it but done, methinks 'twould scarce bequeath
Much food for that dull hypocrite Remorse.
'Tis a fool less on earth !—a clod—a grain
From the o'er-rich creation ;—be it so.
But I, in one brief year, could give to men
More solid, glorious, undecaying good
Than his whole life could purchase :—yet without
The pitiful and niggard dross *he* wastes,
And *I* for lacking starve, my power is naught,
And the whole good undone ! Where, then, the crime,
Though by dread means to compass that bright end ?
And yet—and yet—I falter, and my flesh
Creeps, and the horror of a ghastly thought
Makes stiff my hair,—my blood is cold,—my knees
Do smite each other,—and throughout my frame
Stern manhood melts away. Blow forth, sweet air ;
Brace the mute nerves,—release the gathering ice
That curdles up my veins,—call forth the soul,
That, with a steady and unfailing front,
Hath look'd on want, and woe, and early death—
And walked with thee, sweet air, upon thy course
Away from earth through the rejoicing heaven !
Who moves there ?—Speak !—who art thou !

SCENE V.

Enter BOTELER.

BOTELER.

Murdoch. Boteler !

Hast thou forestall'd me? Come, this bodeth well:
It proves thy courage, Aram.

ARAM.

Rather say

The restless fever that doth spur us on
From a dark thought unto a darker deed.

BOTELER. He should have come ere this.

ARAM.

I pray thee, Boteler,

Is it not told of some great painter—whom
Rome bore, and earth yet worships—that he slew
A man—a brother man—and without ire,
But with cool heart and hand, that he might fix
His gaze upon the wretch's dying pangs;
And by them learn what mortal throes to paint
On the wrung features of a suffering God?

BOTELER. Ay: I have heard the tale.

ARAM.

And *he* is honour'd:

Men vaunt his glory, but forget his guilt.
They see the triumph; nor, with wolfish tongues,
Feed on the deed from which the triumph grew.
Is it not so?

BOTELER.

Thou triflest: this is no hour

For the light legends of a gossip's lore——

ARAM. Peace, man! I did but question of the fact.

Enough.—I marvel why our victim lingers?

BOTELER. Hush! dost thou hear no footstep?—Ha, he
comes!

I see him by yon pine-tree. Look, he smiles;
Smiles as he walks, and sings——

ARAM.

Alas! poor fool!

So sport we all, while over us the pall
Hangs, and Fate's viewless hands prepare our shroud.

SCENE VI.

Enter MONSON.

MONSON. Ye have not waited, sirs?

BOTELER.

Nay, name it not.

MONSON. The nights are long and bright: an hour the less
Makes little discount from the time.

ARAM. *An hour!*

What deeds an hour may witness!

MONSON. It is true.

(*To Boteler*).—Doth he upbraid?—he has a gloomy brow:
I like him not.

BOTELER. The husk hides goodly fruit.
'Tis a deep scholar, Monson; and the gloom
Is not of malice, but of learned thought.

MONSON. Say'st thou?—I love a scholar. Let us on:
We will not travel far to-night.

ARAM. *Not far!*

BOTELER. Why, as our limbs avail;—thou hast the gold?

MONSON. Ay, and my wife suspects not. [*Laughing.*]

BOTELER. Come, that's well.

I'm an old soldier, Monson, and I love
This baffling of the Church's cankering ties.
We'll find thee other wives, my friend!—Who holds
The golden lure shall have no lack of loves.

MONSON. Ha! ha!—both wise and merry. (*To Aram.*)

—Come, sir, on.

ARAM. I follow.

(*Aside*)— Can men sin thus in a dream?

SCENE VII.

*Scene changes to a different part of the Forest—a Cave, overhung
with firs and other trees—the Moon at her full, but Clouds are
rolling swiftly over her disc—ARAM rushes from the Cavern.*

ARAM. 'Tis done!—'tis done—'tis done!—

A life is gone

Out of a crowded world! *I* struck no more!

Oh, God!—I did not slay him!—'twas not *I*!

(*Enter BOTELER more slowly from the Cave, and looking round.*)

BOTELER. Why didst thou leave me ere our task was o'er?

ARAM. Was he not dead, then?—Did he breathe again?
Or cry, "Help, help!"—*I* did not strike the blow!

BOTELER. Dead!—and no witness save the blinded bat!
But the gold, Aram! thou didst leave the gold?

ARAM. The gold! I had forgot. *Thou* hast the gold.
Come, let us share, and part—

BOTELER. Not here; the spot
Is open, and the rolling moon may light
Some wanderer's footsteps hither. To the deeps
Which the stars pierce not—of the inmost wood—
We will withdraw and share—and weave our plans,
So that the world may know not of this deed.

ARAM. Thou sayest well! I did not strike the blow!
How red the moon looks! let us hide from her!



ACT II.

(Time, Ten Years after the date of the first Act.)

SCENE I.

Peasants dancing—a beautiful Wood Scene—a Cottage in the front.

MADELINE—LAMBURN—MICHAEL.

(LAMBURN comes forward.)

COME, my sweet Madeline, though our fate denies
The pomp by which the great and wealthy mark
The white days of their lot, at least thy sire
Can light with joyous faces and glad hearts
The annual morn which brought so fair a boon,
And blest his rude hearth with a child like thee.

MADELINE. My father, my dear father, since that morn
The sun hath call'd from out the depth of time
The shapes of twenty summers: and no hour
That did not own to Heaven thy love—thy care.

LAMBOURN. Thou hast repaid me ; and mine eyes o'er-
flow

With tears that tell thy virtues, my sweet child ;
For ever from thy cradle thou wert fill'd
With meek and gentle thought ; thy step was soft,
And thy voice tender ; and within thine eyes,
And on thy cloudless brow, lay deeply glass'd
The quiet and the beauty of thy soul.
As thou didst grow in years, the love and power
Of nature waxed upon thee ; thou wouldst pore
On the sweet stillness of the summer hills,
Or the hush'd face of waters, as a book
Where God had written beauty : and in turn
Books grew to thee, as Nature's page had grown,
And study and lone musing nursed thy youth.
Yet wert thou ever woman in thy mood,
And soft, though serious ; nor in abstract thought
Lost household zeal, or the meek cares of love.
Bless thee, my child. Thou look'st around for one
To chase the *paler* rose from that pure cheek,
And the vague sadness from those loving eyes.
Nay, turn not, Madeline, for I know, in truth,
No man to whom I would so freely give
Thy hand as his—no man so full of wisdom,
And yet so gentle in his bearing of it ;
No man so kindly in his thoughts of others—
So rigid of all virtues in himself,
As this same learned wonder, Eugene Aram.

MADELINE. In sooth his name sounds lovelier for thy
praise ;
Would he were by to hear it ! for methinks
His nature given too much to saddening thought,
And words like thine would cheer it. Oft he starts
And mutters to himself, and folds his arms,
And traces with keen eyes the empty air ;
Then shakes his head, and smiles—no happy smile !

LAMBOURN. It is the way with students, for they live
 In an ideal world, and people this
 With shadows thrown from fairy forms afar.
 Fear not!—thy love, like some fair morn of May,
 Shall chase the dreams in clothing earth with beauty.
 But the noon wanes, and yet he does not come.
 Neighbours, has one amongst you seen this day
 The scholar Aram?

MICHAEL. By the hoary oak
 That overhangs the brook, I mark'd this morn
 A bending figure, motionless and lonely.
 I near'd it, but it heard—it saw me—not ;
 It spoke—I listen'd—and it said, “ Ye leaves
 That from the old and changeful branches fall
 Upon the waters, and are borne away
 Whither none know, ye are men's worthless lives ;
 Nor boots it whether ye drop off by time,
 Or the rude anger of some violent wind
 Scatter ye ere your hour. Amidst the mass
 Of your green life, who misses one lost leaf ? ”
 He said no more ; then I did come beside
 The speaker : it was Aram.

MADÉLINE (*aside*). Moody ever !
 And yet he says he loves me, and is happy !

MICHAEL. But he seem'd gall'd and sore at my ap-
 proach ;
 And when I told him I was hither bound,
 And ask'd if aught I should convey from him,
 He frown'd, and, coldly turning on his heel,
 Answer'd—that “ he should meet me.” I was pain'd
 To think that I had vex'd so good a man.

1ST NEIGHBOUR. Ay, he's good as wise. All men love
 Aram.

2D NEIGHBOUR. And with what justice ! My old dame's
 complaint
 Had baffled all the leeches ; but his art,

From a few simple herbs, distill'd a spirit
Has made her young again.

3D NEIGHBOUR. By his advice,
And foresight of the seasons, I did till
My land, and now my granaries scarce can hold
Their golden wealth; while those who mock'd his words
Can scarcely, from hard earth and treacherous air,
Win aught to keep the wolf from off their door.

MICHAEL. And while he stoops to what poor men should
know,
They say that in the deep and secret lore
That scholars mostly prize, he hath no peer.
Old men, who, pale and care-begone, have lived,
A life amidst their books, will, at his name,
Lift up their hands, and cry, "The wondrous man!"

LAMBOURN. His birthplace must thank Fortune for the
fame
That he one day will win it.

MICHAEL. Dost thou know
Whence Aram came, ere to these hamlet-scenes
Ten summers since he wander'd?

LAMBOURN. Michael, no!
'Twas from some distant nook of our fair isle.
But he so sadly flies from what hath chanced
In his more youthful life, and there would seem
So much of winter in those April days,
That I have shunn'd vain question of the past.
Thus much I learn: he hath no kin alive;
No parent to exult in such a son.

MICHAEL. Poor soul! You spake of sadness. Know
you why
So good a man is sorrowful?—

LAMBOURN. Methinks
He hath been tried—not lightly—by the sharp
And everlasting curse to learning doom'd,
That which poor labour bears without a sigh,

But whose mere breath can wither genius—Want!
 Want, the harsh, hoary beldame—the obscene
 Witch that hath power o'er brave men's thews and nerves,
 And lifts the mind from out itself.

MICHAEL. Why think you
 That he hath been thus cross'd? His means appear
 Enough, at least for his subdued desires.

LAMBOURN. I'll tell thee wherefore. Do but speak of
 want,
 And lo! he winces, and his nether lip
 Quivers impatient, and he sighs, and frowns,
 And mutters—"Hunger is a fearful thing;
 And it is terrible that man's high soul
 Should be made barren in its purest aims
 By the mere lack of the earth's yellow clay."
 Then will he pause—and pause—and come at last
 And put some petty moneys in my hand,
 And cry, "Go, feed the wretch; he must not starve,
 Or he will sin. Men's throats are scarcely safe
 While Hunger prowls beside them!"

MICHAEL. The kind man!
 But this comes only from a *gentle* heart,
 Not from a *tried* one.

LAMBOURN. Nay, not wholly so;
 For I have heard him, as he turn'd away,
 Mutter, in stifled tones, "No man can tell
 What want is in his brother man, unless
 Want's self hath taught him—as the fiend taught me!"

MICHAEL. And hath he ne'er enlarged upon these words,
 Nor lit them into clearer knowledge by
 A more pronounced detail?

LAMBOURN. No; nor have I
 Much sought to question. In my younger days
 I pass'd much time amid the scholar race,
 The learned lamps which light the unpitying world
 By their own self-consuming. They are proud—

A proud and jealous tribe—and proud men loathe
 To speak of former sufferings: most of all,
 Want's suffering, in the which the bitterest sting
 Is in the humiliation; therefore I
 Cover the past with silence. But whate'er
 His origin or early fate, there lives
 None whom I hold more dearly, or to whom
 My hopes so well could trust my Madeline's lot.

SCENE II.

The Crowd at the back of the Stage gives way—ARAM slowly enters.—The Neighbours greet him with respect, several appear to thank him for various benefits or charities.—He returns the greeting in dumb show, with great appearance of modesty.

ARAM. Nay, nay, good neighbours, ye do make me
 blush

To think that to so large a store of praise
 There goes so poor desert.—My Madeline!—Sweet,
 I see thee, and air brightens!

LAMBOURN. You are late—

But not less welcome. On my daughter's birthday
 You scarce should be the last to wish her joy.

ARAM. Joy—joy!—Is life so poor and harsh a boon
 That we should hail each year that wears its gloss
 And glory into winter? Shall we crown
 With roses Time's bald temples, and rejoice—
 For what?—that we are hastening to the grave?
 No, no!—I cannot look on thy young brow,
 Beautiful Madeline! nor upon the day
 Which makes thee one year nearer unto Heaven,
 Feel sad for Earth, whose very soul thou art;—
 Or art, at least, to me!—for wert thou not,
 Earth would be dead and wither'd as the clay
 Of her own offspring when the breath departs.

LAMBOURN. I scarce had thought a scholar's dusty tomes
 Could teach his lips the golden ways to woo.
 Howbeit, in all times, man never learns
 To love, nor learns to flatter.

Well, my friends,
 Will ye within?—our simple fare invites.
 Aram, when thou hast made thy peace with Madeline,
 We shall be glad to welcome thee.—(*To Michael.*) This
 love
 Is a most rigid faster, and would come
 To a quick ending in an Epicure.

[*Exeunt LAMBOURN, the Neighbours, &c.*

SCENE III.

MADELINE *and* ARAM.

ARAM. Alone with thee!—Peace comes to earth again,
 Beloved! would our life could, like a brook
 Watering a desert, glide unseen away,
 Murmuring our own heart's music—which is love,
 And glassing only Heaven—which is love's life!
 I am not made to live among mankind!
 They stir dark memory from unwilling sleep,
 And——but no matter. Madeline, it is strange
 That one like thee, for whom, methinks, fair Love
 Should wear its bravest and most gallant garb,
 Should e'er have cast her heart's rich freight upon
 A thing like me—not fashion'd in the mould
 Which wins a maiden's eye—austere of life,
 And grave and sad of bearing—and so long
 Inured to solitude, as to have grown
 A man that hath the shape, but not the soul,
 Of the world's inmates.

MADELINE. 'Tis for that I loved.
 The world I love not—therefore I love *thee*!
 Come, shall I tell thee—'tis an oft-told tale,

Yet never wearies—by what bright degrees
 Thy empire rose till it o'erspread my soul,
 And made my all of being love? Thou knowest
 When first thou camest into these lone retreats,
 My years yet dwelt in childhood; but my thoughts
 Went deeper than my playmates'. Books I loved,
 But not the books that woo a woman's heart;—
 I loved not tales of war and stern emprise,
 And man let loose on man—dark deeds, of which
 The name was glory, but the nature crime—
 Nor themes of vulgar love—of maidens' hearts
 Won by small worth, set off by gaudy show;—
 Those tales which win the wilder hearts, in me
 Did move some anger and a world of scorn.
 All that I dream'd of sympathy was given
 Unto the lords of Mind—the victor chiefs
 Of Wisdom—or of Wisdom's music—Song;
 And as I read of them, I dream'd, and drew
 In my soul's colours, shapes my soul might love,
 And, loving, worship—they were like to thee!
 Thou camest unknown and lonely—and around
 Thy coming, and thy bearing, and thy mood
 Hung mystery—and, in guessing at its clue,
 Mystery grew interest, and the interest love!

ARAM (*aside*). O woman! how from that which she
 should shun,
 Does the poor trifler draw what charms her most!

MADÉLINE. Then, as Time won thee frequent to our
 hearth,
 Thou from thy learning's height didst stoop to teach me
 Nature's more gentle secrets—the sweet lore
 Of the green herb and the bee-worshipp'd flower;
 And when the night did o'er this nether earth
 Distil meek quiet, and the heart of Heaven
 With love grew breathless, thou wert wont to raise
 My wild thoughts to the weird and solemn stars;

Tell of each orb the courses and the name ;
 And of the winds, the clouds, th' invisible air,
 Make eloquent discourse ; until methought
 No human life, but some diviner spirit
 Alone could preach such truths of things divine.
 And so—and so——

ARAM. From heaven we turn'd to earth,
 And Thought did father Passion !—Gentlest love !
 If thou couldst know how hard it is for one
 Who takes such feeble pleasure in this earth,
 To worship aught earth-born, thou'dst learn how wild
 The wonder of my passion and thy power.
 But ere three days are past thou wilt be mine !
 And mine for ever ! Oh, delicious thought !
 How glorious were the future, could I shut
 The past—the past—from—Ha ! what stirr'd ? didst hear,
 Madeline,—didst hear ?

MADELINE. Hear what !—the very air
 Lies quiet as an infant in its sleep.

ARAM (*looking round*). Methought I heard——

MADELINE. What, love ?

ARAM. It was a cheat

Of these poor fools, the senses. Come, thy hand ;
 I love to feel thy touch, thou art so pure—
 So soft—so sacred in thy loveliness,
 That I feel safe with thee ! Great God himself
 Would shun to launch upon the brow of guilt
 His bolt while thou wert by !

MADELINE. Alas, alas !

Why dost thou talk of guilt ?

ARAM. Did I, sweet love,

Did I say guilt ?—it is an ugly word.

Why, sweet, indeed—did I say guilt, my Madeline ?

MADELINE. In truth you did. Your hand is dry—the
 pulse

Beats quick and fever'd : you consume too much

Of life in thought—you over-rack the nerves—
 And thus a shadow bids them quail and tremble ;
 But when I queen it, Eugene, o'er your home,
 I'll see this fault amended.

ARAM. Ay, thou shalt,—
 In sooth thou shalt.

SCENE IV.

Enter MICHAEL.

MICHAEL. Friend Lambourn sends his greeting,
 And prays you to his simple banquet.

MADELINE. Come !
 His raciest wine will in my father's cup
 Seem dim till you can pledge him. Eugene, come.

ARAM. And if I linger o'er the draught, sweet love,
 Thou'lt know I do but linger o'er the wish
 For thee, which sheds its blessing on the bowl.

.

SCENE V.

*Sunset—a Wood Scene—a Cottage at a distance—in the fore-
 ground a Woodman felling wood.*

Enter ARAM.

Wise men have praised the peasant's thoughtless lot,
 And learned pride hath envied humble toil :
 If they were right, why, let us burn our books,
 And sit us down, and play the fool with Time,
 Mocking the prophet Wisdom's grave decrees,
 And walling this trite PRESENT with dark clouds,
 Till night becomes our nature, and the ray
 Ev'n of the stars but meteors that withdraw
 The wandering spirit from the sluggish rest
 Which makes its proper bliss. I will accost
 This denizen of toil, who, with hard hands,

Prolongs from day to day unthinking life,
And ask if *he* be happy.—Friend, good eve.

WOODMAN. 'Tis the great scholar!—Worthy sir, good
eve.

ARAM. Thou seem'st o'erworn : through this long sum-
mer day

Hast thou been labouring in the lonely glen ?

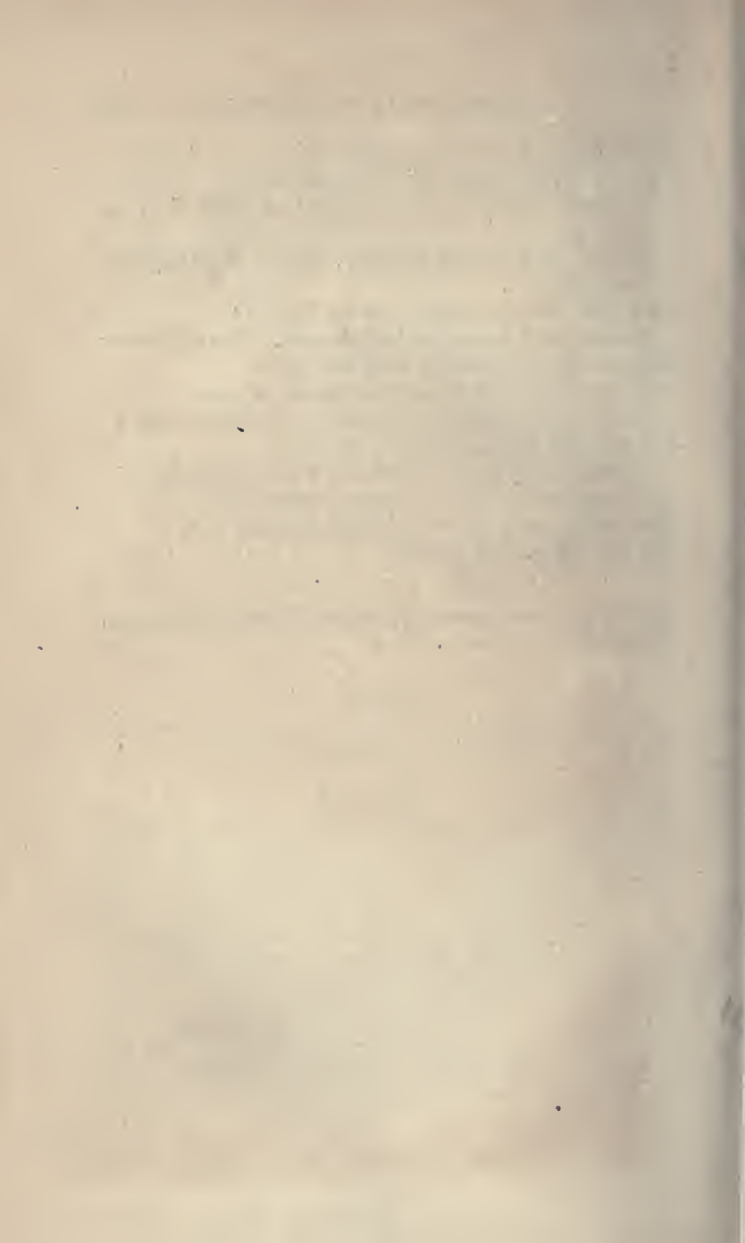
WOODMAN. Ay, save one hour at noon. 'Tis weary work ;
But men like me, good sir, must not repine
At work which feeds the craving mouths at home.

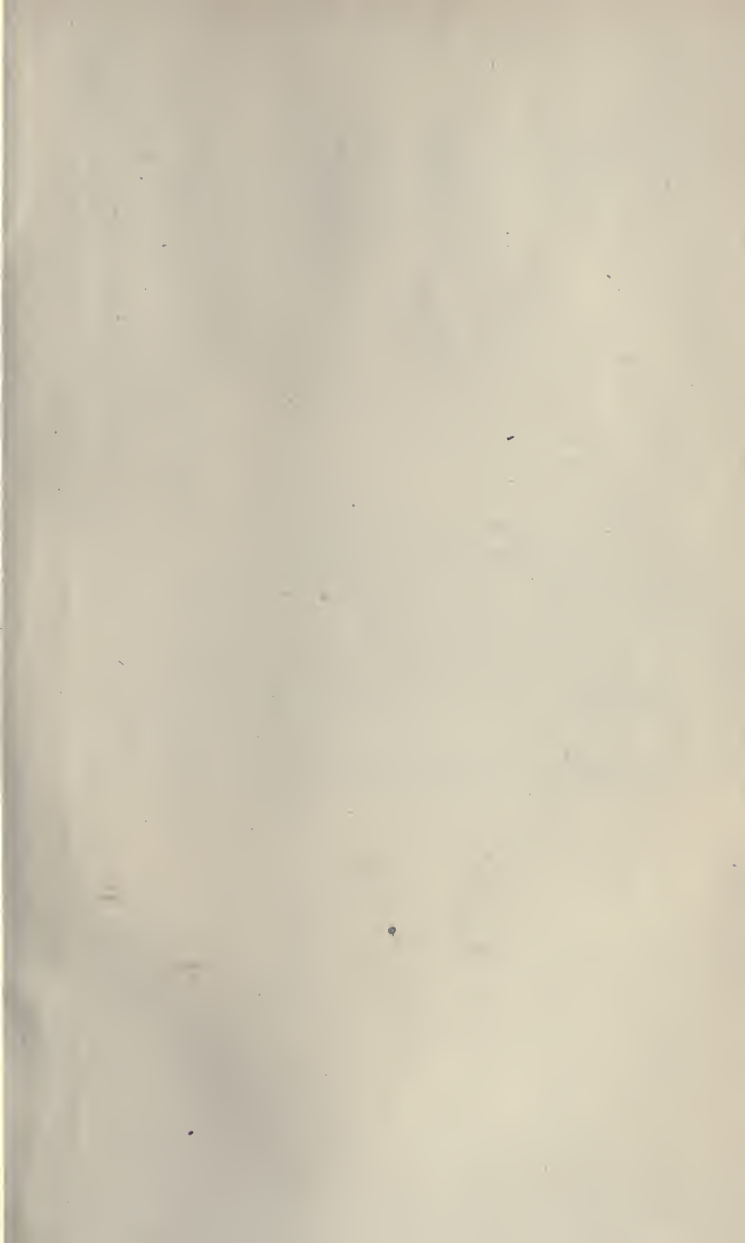
ARAM. Then thou art happy, friend, and with content
Thy life hath made a compact. Is it so ?

WOODMAN. Why, as to that, sir, I must surely feel
Some pangs when I behold the ease with which
The wealthy live ; while I, through heat and cold,
Can scarcely conquer famine.

.

* * In this scene Boteler (the Houseman of the novel) is again
introduced.





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